

MÉTIS WOMEN: SOCIAL STRUCTURE, URBANIZATION AND
POLITICAL ACTIVISM, 1850-1980.

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By

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Abstract

This thesis explores how nineteenth century Métis concepts of family and community have found expression in post 1930s urban development, governance and political activism. In this study, genealogical methods and participant interviews have been used to examine the social, economic and political role of women in 19th century Métis families and communities in order to determine the extent to which these traditional roles were carried forward into an urban context prior to World War II. Based on this research, it was concluded that female kinship relationships were central in structuring and determining the bounds of this Métis community despite economic changes, community movement, physical relocation and political upheaval in both traditional and contemporary contexts. By organizing in ways that were familiar and consistent with past practices, urban Métis women in the early twentieth century had the opportunity and flexibility to informally politicize community issues and recruit organization participants. Over time, the political role played by women evolved and they began to take leading roles in the day-to- day operation of programs and services. By the 1960s-70s, urban Métis women began to formally assert their political will and move from “behind the scenes” into a more public leadership roles. Throughout this evolution, concepts of family, kinship and tradition remained the core organization concept for this community. Through the expression of these 19th century traditions, Métis women have made a significant contribution to post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism.

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Dedication

In memory of Kay Mazer.

Table of Contents

Permission to Use	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Expressions of Tradition in Developing Aboriginal Organizations:	
A Review of the Literature	5
Aboriginal Urbanization and Development, 1960-1985	7
Women's Efforts and Expressions of Tradition in Urban Development, 1980-2009.....	14
Conclusion and Potential for Future Research.....	22
Chapter Two: "She had nothing to offer": Methodological Considerations in Researching Métis Women.....	24
Understanding Métis Political Structures through Genealogical Reconstruction	25
Genealogical Reconstruction to Examine Post-1930 Urban Development, Governance and Political Activism	27
Oral History Methods in Researching Métis Urban Development, Governance and Political Activism	29
Documentary and Archival Research.....	36
Conclusion	42
Chapter Three: Métis Women's Roles in Nineteenth Century Community	
Organization and Governance	44
Nineteenth Century Buffalo Hunt Economy	44
Round Prairie – A Buffalo Hunt Community	46
Métis Community and Family Structure	51
Female Kinship Expressed in the Round Prairie Community	54
Asserting Political Influence	61
Conclusion	76
Chapter Four: "But we were one community": The Significance of Women in the 1930s Social and Political Organization of the Saskatoon Métis Community	77
Changing Economic and Social Roles in the City	77
Traditional Métis Community Structures in an Urban Environment	83
1930s Political Organization	102
"Well you never know what could happen": Women's Political Activism	107
Decline of the 1930s Métis Society	110
Conclusion	112
Chapter Five: Influencing 1960s Political Organization: The Growing Assertion of Women's Political Will	114
Organizing Metis Local 11	115
Creation of the Native Alcohol Council	119

Building SaskNative Housing	124
Opening the Jim Sinclair Centre	126
Expansion of the Native Alcohol Council	129
Conclusion	131
Conclusion	133
Bibliography	139

List of Tables

Table 1. Métis Families Residing in West Side Neighbourhoods, Saskatoon, 1913-1940	87
Table 2. Métis Families Residing in East Side Neighbourhoods, Saskatoon, 1930-1949	88

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Round Prairie Area c. 1885	47
Figure 2. Trottier's Hunting Brigade c. 1850s-60s	57
Figure 3. Children Born at Round Prairie c. 1860s-70s	58
Figure 4. Genealogical Connection Between Gabriel Dumont and Charles Trottier	64
Figure 5. Dumont, Ouellette and Wilkie Genealogies	66
Figure 6. Children Born in Montana Prior to 1885	67
Figure 7. Children Born in Montana After 1885	69
Figure 8. Ouellette, Wells and Belcourt Intermarriage with Laframboise Families	72
Figure 9. Edie Trotchie Genealogy	74
Figure 10. Map of Saskatoon c. 1930	86
Figure 11. Map of Métis Families Residences in Saskatoon, 1915-29	89
Figure 12. Map of Métis Families Residences in Saskatoon, 1930-45	90
Figure 13. Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier Genealogy	93
Figure 14. Map of Saskatoon c.1906	97
Figure 15. Families Residing on East Side	98
Figure 16. Peter Trotchie Genealogy	101
Figure 17. 1930s Métis Society Leadership Connections to Laframboise Family	106
Figure 18. Connections Between Local 11 Leadership and 1930s Leaders	117
Figure 19. Connections Between Employees of the Follow Up Program	122
Figure 20. Connections Between SaskNative Housing Employees and Early 1930s Leadership	125

INTRODUCTION

The Métis have a long history as an urbanized population within the city of Saskatoon. By the 1930s, significant numbers of Métis families from Round Prairie could be found living in Saskatoon, becoming the city's the first permanent urban aboriginal population.¹ In the city, these families quickly socially and politically organized their community by drawing on ideas of tradition that they had carried with them into the city. By the late 1930s, these families had formed the leadership of the Saskatoon Métis Society, a local chapter of the provincial Métis Society of Saskatchewan, the political body representing Saskatchewan Métis and the precursor to the contemporary political body the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan. Decades later, second and third generations of these same families continued to actively pursue the development of institutions in Saskatoon such as Métis Local 11, the Native Alcohol Council and SaskNative Housing. Created by and controlled by Métis, these institutions addressed the issues of health, education, employment and housing that faced their community.

In “Wage Labour, Aboriginal Rights and the Cree of the Churchill River Basin, Saskatchewan,” Peter Doug Elias discusses ideas of tradition and whether or not certain forms of behavior are expressions of Aboriginal traditions. In defining “tradition”, he argues that “for current behavior to be traditional it need only be continuous with the past; there is no implication that traditional behavior must be identical to behavior in the past.”² He argues that for Cree economic wage labour practices to be considered

¹ For the purpose of this discussion, the term ‘aboriginal’ refers to both First Nations and Métis people and organizations and institutions that are inclusive for all Aboriginal people. The terms “Indian” and “Native” have been used to reflect the terminology identified in the literature. The community of Round Prairie was located on the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River, approximately 40 kilometres south of the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

² Peter Doug Elias, “Wage Labour, Aboriginal Rights and the Cree of the Churchill River,” *Native Studies Review*, 6 no. 2 (1990) 57.

traditional, they need not be identical to practices of the past, only consistent with them.³ According to Elias, the wage labour practices of the Cree of the Churchill River Basin should be considered traditional because of their history as suppliers of wage labour during the fur trade. Allowing for change in cultural practices, Elias further suggests that a better measure of tradition might be based on the concept of resilience. This resilience, he argues, would allow for adaptation to traditional practices. According to Elias,

Resilience determines the persistence of relationships within an ecological system that includes a population of humans. A system is said to be resilient if it is capable of absorbing change and still persist as a system. The question becomes one of determining if and when a given social system was overwhelmed by change.⁴

This suggests that traditional practices can perhaps be viewed on a sort of continuum, where traditional practices are capable of change over time but still remain consistent with the past.

Theorist Jon Elster in his work *Explaining Technical Change: A Case Study in the Philosophy of Science*, also suggests that traditions are not static and that they may change over time. He describes tradition as having “a short and inaccurate memory: it involves doing approximately what your parents did, not exactly what people in society have been doing since time immemorial.”⁵ In fact, he argues that for one to believe that traditions do not change over time is “to be a victim of myopia, or to accept unthinkingly that local descriptions of the [traditional] practice as ancient and unchanging.”⁶ Using these concepts or tradition as defined by Elias and Elster, to what extent did Métis family

³ Elias, “Wage Labour,” 59.

⁴ Elias, “Wage Labour,” 59.

⁵ Jon Elster, *Explaining Technical Change: A Case Study in the Philosophy of Science*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 63.

⁶ Elster, *Technical Change*, 63.

and community traditions change or persist given the significant changes that the community of Round Prairie was undergoing in relocating to an urban environment?

In this thesis, ideas and definitions of “tradition” and “resilience of tradition” as expressed by Elias and Elster are used as a theoretical framework to examine the role of family and women in the nineteenth century communities and in the organization of the Saskatoon urban Métis community. This is done by examining ideas of nineteenth century family, community and governance structures where the Métis organized themselves along extended family lines into family-based buffalo-hunting groups. It includes an examination of the importance of female kinship in structuring and governing Métis communities, as these buffalo-hunting groups often formed around groups of sisters coming together with their husbands and families. And, it includes an examination of the importance of women and the social, economic and political roles they played within nineteenth century families and communities and an examination of how women’s social, economic and political roles in their family and community changed to suite their urban environment. Finally, genealogical connections between Métis women activists across three generations were considered and, conclusions drawn of the underlying strength of female kinship in the efforts of Saskatoon Métis to politically and socially organize their community from the 1930s to 1980. Taken together, these ideas help to provide a better understanding of post-1930 urban development, political activism and governance structures by demonstrating that in adapting to their urban environment the Métis drew upon resilient expressions of tradition in utilizing models of governance that were based on nineteenth century community social and economic structures.

Nineteenth century ideas of tradition, family, community and systems of governance persist within Saskatoon's urban aboriginal community. The efforts of Métis women in adapting to their urban environment can be viewed as a continuation of the fundamental social and political roles women played within nineteenth century families and communities. And, once relocated the Métis community, and Métis women in particular, adapted to their urban environment in ways that were recognizable to their community.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPRESSIONS OF TRADITION IN DEVELOPING URBAN ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Academic writing that addresses the Canadian aboriginal urbanization experience of the 1960s-70s is quite extensive.¹ Written mostly in the 1970s to mid-1980s, these works were written in response to the increasing urbanization of aboriginal people that began in earnest in the 1960s. They generally argued that aboriginal people were incompatible with urban living because of the social and economic challenges they faced in an alien urban environment. Much of this early work was produced as case studies of individual cities, which examined push/pull factors for aboriginal people in their initial migration and adjustment to urban centres. These works generally argue that factors such as low levels of education and employment coupled with discrimination and cultural differences and a reluctance to adopt an urban lifestyle are challenges for aboriginal people in adjusting to life in the city. According to David Newhouse and Evelyn Peters, “for decades public discourses have defined aboriginal and urban cultures as incompatible. Migration to the city was interpreted as a decision to leave rural communities and culture, and to assimilate into mainstream society.”¹ As a result,

¹ These works include, but are not limited to: A.K. Davis, *Edging into Mainstream: Urban Indians in Saskatchewan* (Calgary: self-published, 1965); Mark Nagler, *Natives Without a Home* (Don Mills: Longman Canada Limited, 1970); Mark Nagler, *Indians in the City: A Study of the Urbanization of Indians in Toronto* (Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, Ottawa: St. Paul University, 1975); Hugh Brody, *Indians on Skid Row* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1971); Edgar J. Dosman, *Indians: The Urban Dilemma* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972); D. Bruce Sealey and Verna J Kirkness, *Indians Without Tipis: A Resource Book by Indians and Métis* (Winnipeg: William Clare Limited, 1973); W.T. Stanbury, *Success and Failure: Indians in Urban Society* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975); James N. Kerri, *Unwilling Urbanites: The Life Experiences of Canadian Indians in a Prairie City* (Washington: University Press of America, 1978); Larry Krotz, *Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, Inc., 1980); and, D. McCaskill, “The Urbanization of Indians in Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver: A Comparative Analysis,” *Culture* 1 (1981):82-89.

aboriginal peoples' urbanization experience has been characterized in terms of the social and economic challenges they faced.

Much of this early literature notes the existence of urban aboriginal institutions, but does not provide a thorough analysis of the creation or evolution of these organizations and, as a result largely dismisses the efforts of community members, families and women in the organizations. According to David Newhouse, Professor of Indigenous Studies at Trent University,

over the last four decades (1960-2000), urban Aboriginal landscapes have been transformed through the emergence of Aboriginal organizations designed to meet the many needs of a growing urban aboriginal population. [Yet], this network of organization has been neglected in the research.²

Of the existing research, Newhouse suggests that the right questions about urban aboriginal institutions have not been asked. Specifically, Newhouse argues, no one has asked,

What are the institutions of urban Aboriginal life? What functions and roles do they serve? How do they develop and change? Who are the people who work within them? What difference do these institutions make? [and], What problems do institutions encounter?³

Had these questions framed this early literature, the role of family, women and tradition in urban development may have been elucidated. The purpose of this review then, is first to examine this early literature that begins the process of addressing urban development in order to gain a better understanding of how expressions of tradition have been used in Canadian aboriginal urban development and political activism. These earlier works were generally produced from the 1970s to the early 1980s. The second purpose of this chapter

² David Newhouse, "The Invisible Infrastructure: Urban Aboriginal Institutions and Organizations," in *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, ed. David R. Newhouse and Evelyn J. Peters (Ottawa: Policy Research Initiative, 2002), 244.

³ Newhouse, *Infrastructure*, 248.

is to review more recent studies of Aboriginal institutional development in Canadian urban centres that have been produced since the late 1990s. Within this recent body of literature more attention has been paid to the efforts of aboriginal women in developing institutions and there is a growing recognition of the use of tradition in facilitating urban development and adaptation to an urban environment. Together, these categories of literature are used to contextualize the efforts of Saskatoon Métis within a larger framework of urban aboriginal institutional development and within the larger movement of aboriginal women's activism.

Aboriginal Urbanization and Development, 1960-1985

While much of this early literature notes the existence of aboriginal organizations, it has generally overlooked the formation of urban aboriginal institutions and as a result, does not acknowledge the role of aboriginal traditions in the development of urban institutions. However, within this early literature, the work of sociologist Mark Nagler, political scientist Edgar J. Dosman and journalist Rita Schilling are noteworthy as they begin to address urban development. While these studies do not specifically address the role of tradition in the creation or development of urban institutions, they are valuable because they describe the varying degree in which aboriginal people participated in urban aboriginal organizations.

Nagler and Dosman suggest that participation in aboriginal organizations helps to facilitate the adjustment process but note that rates of participation are low. They argue that an individual's economic position largely influences one's ability to participate in urban organizations. Economic stratification often creates a challenge for aboriginal people in participating in urban organizations. Dosman, for instance, in his study of the

Saskatoon urban Aboriginal population, provides three economic categories of urban aboriginal people: affluent, anomic and welfare. The “welfare” is the largest and fastest growing group. According to Dosman, this group is defined not by their receipt of social assistance but by their rejection of an urban value system and the culture of poverty in which they live.⁴ This group may access services from organizations such as Friendship Centres, but it was as clients, rather than as leaders.

The “anomic” group is a relatively large group, economically placed between the “welfare” and “affluent.” Members of this group strive to be self-supporting but often because of circumstance, must rely on social assistance programs. Their lower economic status, their drive to be self-supporting and their refusal to live a life on “skid row” often places this group in a tenuous position where their need for services becomes greater than organizations such as Friendship Centres can provide.⁵ They therefore do not largely participate in organizations as clients, and they lack the resources to be politically involved as leaders. They have difficulty in finding time and resources such as childcare, relief from job pressures and access to transportation in order to attend meeting and be politically involved.

In Dosman’s categorization, it is the “affluent” that have been the most successful in their adaptation to urban life because they are economically stable enough to get involved in, and often form the leadership of, urban aboriginal organizations and institutions. He argues that the affluent become involved because these organizations help to provide management experience, provide a public political platform, and help bolster

⁴ Dosman, *Indians*, 68.

⁵ Dosman, *Indians*, 172.

the individual's public image.⁶ Interestingly, he also contends that while the affluent formed the leadership of aboriginal organizations, they were most often, ineffective in meeting the needs of their community. Often the "affluent" leadership was so far socially and economically removed from the "welfare" and the "anomic" individual that they did not represent their membership.⁷ Further, because of the small group of affluent, it was often members of the same families leading organizations. This proved to create factions in the organizations and was a deterrent for to creating a large community following. Through this examination, Dosman reveals the roots of growing social and political activism within a small segment of the urban aboriginal community and notes the activism of a group of families in urban development. Unfortunately, he pays little attention to the development of specific organizations and it is unclear from the literature what role individual community members and families played in establishing these organizations.

Like Dosman, Nagler also classifies urban aboriginal people by economic status. Using data collected primarily in Toronto, with reference to other Canadian urban centres, he classifies urban aboriginal people into four groups: white-collar workers; blue collar-workers; transitional residents; and, short-term urban residents. For Nagler, the white-collar group is the smallest of the four groups and has similarities to Dosman's "affluent" group. He further categorizes the white-collar group into those that identify with their aboriginal heritage, those who are ambivalent about it, and those that have rejected it. For Nagler, it is those that continue to identify with their aboriginal heritage that have been most successful in adapting to urban life, have become community

⁶ Dosman, *Indians*, 172.

⁷ Dosman, *Indians*, 153.

leaders, and have begun to organize aboriginal people at the local community level.⁸ This group, he argues, played a significant role in creating and developing urban aboriginal institutions and encouraging other aboriginal people to become socially and politically active in their communities.⁹ Unfortunately he goes no further in examining how expressions of tradition may have influenced the development of these institutions.

While much of this early urbanization literature identifies that there was a growing network of social services and other types organizations available to aboriginal people in helping them adjust, there is a disagreement among scholars as to the effectiveness of these institutions in meeting the needs of aboriginal people. For instance, much of the early literature identifies the existence of Friendship Centres in urban centres and suggests they helped to facilitate the urban adjustment process. While many authors acknowledge that Friendship Centres were organized and developed by aboriginal people, there has been little attention paid to the development, evolution and significance of this institution in creating opportunities for cultural activities and assisting aboriginal people in urban adjustment. As suggested earlier, this is perhaps one of the weaknesses evident in this body of literature because it creates a void in the discussion of urban aboriginal organizational development in the 1960s-70s.

In comparison, analysis of urban aboriginal institutions prior to the 1980s in Canada is extremely limited and, therefore, does not speak to the role of tradition in the development of urban organizations at great length. Further, little attention is paid to the development of formal or informal organizations created and run by urban aboriginal people and rarely does the discussion move past the creation of Friendship Centres.

⁸ Nagler, *Natives*, 56.

⁹ Nagler, *Natives*, 56-57.

Therefore, the focus in this body of literature is on aboriginal involvement in organizations largely as clients rather than in positions of decision-making authority. Dosman and Rita Schilling, however, are perhaps two exceptions that begin to examine aboriginal involvement in organizational development. While Dosman argues that there was a small segment of Saskatoon's urban aboriginal population like Métis activist and university professor Howard Adams involved in leadership roles within organizations such as the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, Schilling focuses specifically on the efforts of Saskatoon Métis under the leadership of Clarence Trotchie. Interestingly, both authors examine the urban aboriginal community in the same city, during the 1960s-80s, which make these two works very valuable to this particular study. However, Dosman, in studying both the Métis and First Nations community in Saskatoon only notes the activism of Adams and has ignored the role of other individuals, such as Trotchie. Conversely, Schilling argues that Trotchie and others, including members of his extended family, were actively involved in the creation and sustainability of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and the Native Alcohol Council. The reason for Dosman's oversight is unknown, but raises some questions about his study and why he has overlooked the considerable efforts of many Métis in organizing their community and creating urban aboriginal organizations in Saskatoon.

Dosman's oversight makes Schilling's study an important contribution to both the Saskatoon-based literature and to more general literature on urban Aboriginality. Her work is valuable as she specifically discusses at length, the social and political organization of the urban Métis community in the city beginning in the 1930s through to

the early 1980s and because she provides an overview of provincial Métis organization.¹⁰ She also spent a significant amount of time working with some of the Métis community's leaders in researching her work. Schilling wrote for the non-specialist, but nevertheless provides a valuable contribution to the documentation of community organization among the Métis in Saskatoon as she discusses urban institutional development by a core group of Métis families. Schilling further alludes to the role of women in the development of such institutions. While not specifically addressing the role of tradition in urban development or political activism, she does highlight the importance of family networks and women's activism in urban development. She notes that there were many Métis women who worked behind the scenes organizing the community. While men were

¹⁰ Schilling not only provides a discussion of social and political development among the Métis of Saskatoon but also examines their role in provincial Métis organization beginning in the 1930s. It should be noted that there exist numerous studies of Métis social and political organization at the provincial and national level. While most of these studies do not focus on urban development they do highlight that Métis activism has much deeper roots than generally believed and they identify that social and political activism was a result of growing awareness and social activism. Many also clearly illustrate the longevity of Métis political organization in Canada as they note many organizations started as early as the late 1920s-30s in some provinces. Interestingly, these organizations tended to be located within urban centres, with leadership who lived in urban centres, yet had as their focus, issues such as land, aboriginal rights and self-government that reflected rural Métis, not urban issues. These works include, but are not limited to: John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd, 2007); D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Métis: Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1975); Murray Dobbin, "Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society – 1935-1930. Part One: Early Beginnings." *New Breed Magazine*. August 1978, 16; Murray Dobbin, "Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society – 1935-1930. Part Three: Political Interference and Internal Divisions." *New Breed Magazine*. October 1978, 11.; Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris Métis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1981); Murray Dobbin, "The Métis in Western Canada Since 1945," in *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945*, ed. A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984), 183-193; Rita Schilling, *Gabriel's Children* (Saskatoon: Saskatoon Métis Society Local 11, 1983); Donald Purich, *The Métis* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1988); Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989); Joe Sawchuck, "Fragmentation and Realignment: The Continuing Cycle of Métis and Non-Status Indian Political Organizations in Canada" *Native Studies Review* 10:2 (1995): 77-95; Joe Sawchuk, *The Dynamics of Native Politics: The Alberta Métis Experience* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1998).; T.C. Pocklington, *The Government and Politics of the Alberta Métis Settlements* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1991); Sheila Jones Morrison, *Rotten to the Core: The Politics of the Manitoba Métis Federation* (Winnipeg: Hingell Printing, 1995); James M. Pitsula, "The Thatcher Government in Saskatchewan and the Revival of Métis Nationalism, 1964-1971," *Great Plains Quarterly* Summer/Fall (1997):213-235; and, F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

publicly acknowledged as the communities leaders, women contributed by organizing meetings, encouraging community attendance and participation, working as secretaries for the institutions, organizing fundraisers such as bingos and bake sales as well as social and cultural events such as dances aimed at bringing the community together. The only work in this early body of literature to provide any in-depth analysis of the formation to urban aboriginal institutions, Schilling's is an important contribution to the literature that addresses urban development in Canada. However, this work is not without weakness. As Schilling writes for a general audience and uses no system of academic referencing, extra efforts needed to be taken to ensure the accuracy of her results by triangulating her work with other sources. Despite this, her work is significant to this study as she articulates the role of Métis women in urban aboriginal organization development. Her work also signals a shift in thinking about women's political activism and their efforts in urban development that is prevalent in more recent literature.

As already noted, within the early body of literature produced in the 1970s and early 1980s, there has been no analysis of the role of tradition in the development of urban aboriginal institutions. Instead, the literature has argued that urban aboriginal institutions had low participation rates and that leadership did not represent the membership. Interestingly, we do know that many of these early urban aboriginal organizations such as Friendship Centres continue to exist and many are exclusively run by aboriginal people.¹¹ This longevity perhaps speaks to the significance of these early institutions during the initial urbanization process that has not been elucidated in this early literature.

¹¹ National Association of Friendship Centres website. <http://www.nafc-aboriginal.com/history.htm> (accessed August 6, 2008).

Within this body of literature, Dosman and Schilling are noteworthy for the consideration of Métis urban development. These authors begin to shift away from the discourse that has framed the Métis as participants in a shared urban Aboriginal experience and as victims of their social and political circumstances. Rather, they begin to portray Métis as active agents in creating social and political institutions to suit their community. Schilling is particularly noteworthy for her thorough examination of the role of family and women in urban development. As a result, her work should be seen as a bridge between this early literature and more recent literature that examines the role of women and the importance of kinship and tradition in urban development.

Women's Efforts and Expressions of Tradition in Urban Development, 1980-2009

The second category of literature important in this review includes more recent studies of urban aboriginal institutional development. Since the late 1990s, there has been an increasing recognition of the role of family, women and ideas of tradition in influencing and facilitating urban development and adaptation to an urban environment. Interestingly, aboriginal women scholars have produced much of this literature.¹² While Canadian aboriginal urban development is the focus of this review, literature that indicates a relationship between tradition and urban development is increasing within both the Canadian and American context and should be considered because more

¹² These women scholars include: Paivi Hoikkala, "Feminists or Reformers? American Indian Women and Political Activism in Phoenix, 1965-1980," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* Vol. 22, No. 4 (1998) 163-185.; Heather Howard-Bobiwash, "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975," *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 3 and 4 (2003): 566-582.; Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self-Governance, and Native Women's Organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 3 and 4 (2003): 548-565.; Susan Lobo, "Urban Clan Mothers: Key Households in Cities," *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 3 and 4 (2003): 505-522.; Sylvia Maracle, "The Eagle Has Landed: Native Women, Leadership and Community Development," in *Strong Women's Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival*. ed. Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003): 70-80.; and, Ann Terry Straus and Debra Valentino, "Gender and Community Organization: Leadership in the Chicago Indian Community," *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 3 and 4 (2003): 523-532.

attention is being paid to how expressions of tradition of aboriginal women in developing institutions.¹³ Of the Canadian literature, the most significant for providing a gendered perspective are Sylvia Maracle's and Heather Howard-Bobiwash's studies of Native women's leadership and activism in Toronto, Ontario and Nancy Janovicek's examination of women's organization in Thunder Bay, Ontario.¹⁴ Of the American literature, the most significant in examining women's efforts in urban development include Ann Terry Straus and Debra Valentino's study of women's leadership in the Chicago Indian Community, Paivi Hoikkala's examination of women's political activism in Phoenix, Arizona and Susan Lobo's study of "Urban Clan Mothers" in the San Francisco Bay area of California.¹⁵ Collectively, these works examine Canadian and American aboriginal women's actions and portray them as active agents in creating and directing institutions to meet the needs of their urban communities. In creating institutions, these authors argue that women often looked to their traditional roles within the family and community to necessitate this development.

¹³ For a discussion of the American urban aboriginal organizations see Joan Ablon, "Relocated American Indians in the San Francisco Bay Area: Social Integration and Indian Identity," *Human Organization* Vol. 23, No.4 (1964): 296-304; Grant Arndt, "Contrary to Our Way of Thinking": The Struggle for an American Indian Center in Chicago, 1946-1953," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* Vol. 22 No. 4 (1998) 117-134; David R. M. Beck, "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Self-Determination in an Urban Indian Community," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Fall (2002): 117-141; Ned Blackhawk, "I Can Carry on From Here: The Relocation of American Indians to Los Angeles," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 11 No.2 (1995): 16-30; Edmond Danzinger Jr., *Survival and Regeneration, Detroit's American Indian Community* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991); Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); James B. LaGrand *Indian Metropolis: Native Americans in Chicago 1945-1975* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Nicolas G. Rosenthal, "Repositioning Indianness: Native American Organizations in Portland, Oregon, 1959-1975," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 71 no. 3 (2002): 415-438; Nancy Shoemaker, "Urban Indians and Ethnic Choices: American Indian Organization in Minneapolis, 1920-1950," *The Western Historical Quarterly* November (1988): 431-447; and Joan A. Weibel-Orlando *Indian Country, L.A. Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Maracle, *Women.*; Howard Bobiwash, *Class Strategies.*; Janovicek, *Assisting.*

¹⁵ Straus and Valentino, *Gender.*; Hoikkala, *Feminists*; Lobo, *Clan Mothers.*

Maracle argues, that during the period of initial urbanization, aboriginal communities were fraught with social and economic challenges, but that it was women that first began to make changes in their community. Aboriginal women “knew that their families needed places to belong in urban settings as Native people, and so they created the very organizations that could help address their survival.”¹⁶ According to Maracle,

Whether the vision was a friendship centre, a Native women’s centre, a shelter or a dance troupe, they were willing to work for it. In doing so, they encouraged the painters and craftspeople, the dreamers and the teachers and the clans to recover their vision and culture.¹⁷

In addressing urban organization development, Maracle acknowledges the often humble beginnings of these organizations as informal gathering places that evolved into more formal community organizations. She argues that women were instrumental in creating institutions first for their communities and then specifically for aboriginal women. She acknowledges the significance of women’s contributions in supporting these organizations through craft and bake sales and their tremendous amount of volunteer efforts. More importantly, she acknowledges that women often looked to their traditional roles within the family and to cultural teachings when organizing their urban community.

In her study of Toronto, Howard-Bobiwash argues that many aboriginal women who came to Toronto found avenues for creating urban aboriginal organizations for positive change in their community and in doing so, became social and political activists and community leaders. She argues that aboriginal women in Toronto used diverse strategies for organizing that changed over time. One such strategy for organizing the urban community began as early as the mid-1920s, with individual homes becoming informal gathering places. Generally operated by older aboriginal women, these gathering

¹⁶ Maracle, *Women*, 72.

¹⁷ Maracle, *Women*, 71.

places became spaces for newly urbanized people to meet and socialize with each other.¹⁸ These gathering houses also provided a place for women to more formally organize. For instance, early in the twentieth century, the Jamieson's house was used for a gathering place.¹⁹ After World War II several women who had regularly met at the Jamieson's had become more formally active and worked to transform their informal support service into the North American Indian Club.²⁰ They later organized the Native Canadian Centre, both formal organizations where aboriginal people could meet, find support services and resources, and participate in cultural activities. Through these efforts, these women "organized community activity [and] shared the experience of being on the front-line of the immediate social, health, employment, and educational needs on native people in the city."²¹

Howard-Bobiwash also argues that when first coming to Toronto, many aboriginal women found that traditional domestic or caregiver roles they filled in their communities were transferable to an urban context. For instance, many found employment as nannies with the city's more well off families. They were then able to maximize their opportunity and receive some form of education in secretarial school, nursing or teaching. Through work and school these women were able to form a social network that included a wide diversity of aboriginal people. Using this class mobility, women were then able to come together and form successful organizations to meet the aboriginal community's needs, not just needs of aboriginal women.

¹⁸ Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*, 572.

¹⁹ Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*, 572.

²⁰ Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*, 572.

²¹ Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*, 574.

Janovicek in her examination of aboriginal women's organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario discusses how women worked together as a local chapter of the Ontario Native Women's Association to organize Beendigen, a "status-blind" emergency women's shelter, to help women adjust to the urban environment in the 1970s-80s. Evident in her work, is the insistence by aboriginal women that they have control over their organizations and their belief in the importance of retaining cultural traditions within their organizations. Janovicek argues that women had specific needs and that their voices could not be heard through organizations such as Friendship Centres. As a result, women began to organize their own institutions to address women's issues and, in the process, became activists and community leaders.

Maracle, Howard-Bobiwash and Janovicek all conclude that aboriginal women were instrumental in creating organizations to meet their community's needs. These authors acknowledge aboriginal women's use of tradition in becoming community leaders and agents of positive change in their urban environments. Together, these works can help to fill gaps in the research that speak to Canadian aboriginal women's urban activism.

Ann Terry Straus and Debra Valentino, Paivi Hoikkala along with Susan Lobo provide a gendered perspective on urban aboriginal organizational development in the United States. Straus and Valentino, in studying women's leadership in Chicago, highlight the important role women played "behind the scenes" in organizing community institutions by serving on committees, advising male leadership, establishing clubs, and recruiting members and participants. These authors argue that women's roles were absolutely essential to the effectiveness of the organization, even though men whose

“vision and dedication resulted in the establishment of the community organization and [were] understood as the founders and leaders of the present-day community.”²²

Likewise, Paivi Hoikkala discusses the significant role women had as activists in Phoenix, Arizona. She argues, that in Phoenix, women have had a long history of participation in the urban organizations of the community. Early in the twentieth century, aboriginal women became actively involved in social and cultural activities sponsored by Phoenix’s Central Presbyterian Church. The Central Presbyterian Church congregation included both aboriginal and non-aboriginal congregants, but by 1915, it was largely dominated by aboriginal members and became known in the community as an “Indian Church.”²³ Church activities provided women with the opportunity to become involved in social activities within the urban community and over time, because of this work, many women became known as community activists.

Hoikkala argues, that in 1947, the Phoenix Indian Center replaced the church as the focus of community activism and women became formally employed by the Center. By the late 1970s, the Center had evolved into a sophisticated urban organization offering employment assistance, education, and alcohol programming that women felt important in their family and community.²⁴ According to Hoikkala, this sophistication was reflected in the qualifications and expertise of the Center’s staff who were predominately highly educated women who held professional degrees. She argues, that by organizing their community, these women began to see themselves, not as feminists, but as community reformers and leaders. In Phoenix, aboriginal women were able to politicize their

²² Straus and Valentino, *Gender*, 527-528.

²³ Hoikkala, *Feminists*, 167.

²⁴ Hoikkala, *Feminists*, 177.

community and play a vital role in creating and sustaining Indian organizations that focused on education, health and family welfare.²⁵

Lobo discusses “Urban Clan Mothers,” and informal support services headed by women in the San Francisco Bay area. This group fulfilled many necessary survival functions for urban adaptation that were otherwise carried out by social service agencies. Much like the gathering houses identified by Maracle and Howard-Bobiwash, women who made up the “Urban Clan Mothers” themselves headed families whose homes were used as meeting places and places where ties to family, friends and culture could be maintained. According to Lobo, the Urban Clan Mothers were “essential foundations for community stability and vitality.”²⁶ Lobo argues,

Not only do [Urban Clan Mothers] provide a home where people, especially those on the move, may sleep and eat, but also often act as role models for younger men and women, act as teachers and counselors, or carry out spiritual responsibilities. In some ways, these women are fulfilling culturally-based traditional roles that have been adapted to urban environments. They are activating widely shared values regarding the role of elders and women is assuring the well being of the community overall through the sharing and circulation of resources and knowledge.²⁷

Lobo also acknowledges that some of these “Urban Clan Mothers” often worked, or held leadership positions, in the local Indian community organizations.²⁸ According to Lobo, the majority of Indian organizations in the San Francisco Bay area were primarily created and run by aboriginal women.²⁹ These organizations were often informal but were well known throughout the urban aboriginal community. Lobo contends, that in many of the San Francisco Bay area organizations,

²⁵ Hoikkala, *Feminists*, 181.

²⁶ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 505.

²⁷ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 519.

²⁸ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 514.

²⁹ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 510.

women would move from organization to organization as each closes, shrinks, or expands, yet these women in the long run continue to provide needed core services within the Indian community. Most often it is the women who staff and are on the boards of these organizations, whether as cooks, receptionists, counselors, or directors, and who also in more informal ways maintain key households and function as Urban Clan mothers. Thus, there are multiple ways in which people are linked and are in contact with one another. Through all this motion, this fluidity, an underlying network of connectedness allows for social and cultural continuity.³⁰

According to Lobo, the informal nature of these organizations allowed women to continually “disassemble and reassemble” organizations to meet the changing needs of their community, making these women long-term community leaders and activists.³¹

Straus and Valentino also support the longevity in which women acted as leaders and activists in their community. Providing an analysis of the evolution of leadership of the Chicago Indian Center, they describe how over the course of a few decades, the initially male-dominated center underwent a transition to female-dominated leadership. This shift began in the late 1950s with the organization recognizing the need to have formally educated leaders. This shift was intensified by women’s growing activism as evidenced by their participation in events such as the 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, the formation of the National Indian Youth Council, the growing Civil Rights Movement, and in the American Indian Movement and the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969. This activism placed women in a more public position where they then began to occupy more formal positions of authority and leadership within the Chicago Indian Center and within new organizations that began to develop and break off from the Center.³²

³⁰ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 510.

³¹ Lobo, *Clan Mothers*, 510.

³² Straus and Valentino, *Gender*, 529.

Straus and Valentino, Hoikkala and Lobo, like Maracle, Howard-Bobiwash and Janovicek, challenge the assumption that urban aboriginal organizations and institutions were male-dominated. But what was made clear in these articles is that “Native American men and women have, since the initial days of urban Indian activism and community building, differed with regard to strategies of activism, community service interests and involvement, education and self-identity.”³³ Evident in these works, women found ways to,

articulate the value of positive Native identity pride and strength within the urban context. They also ensured the availability of some form of traditional social structures, particularly in terms of the roles of women as advisors and cultural transmitters.³⁴

Collectively, these authors document that women were actively involved in organizing the urban community to suit their own needs and have their voices heard among the often-perceived male-dominated community.

Conclusion and Potential for Future Research

From a review of the literature that speaks to urban aboriginal women’s efforts in organizing institutions, it is evident that there are few studies that adequately address the social and political activism of urban Métis women. Most of the early urbanization literature, with the exception of Dosman and Schilling, addressing the urbanization process of the 1960s-70s does not adequately address aboriginal contributions to building organizations. This literature, however, does allude to a growing awareness of aboriginal identity in an urban setting and a growing political and social activism. Since the 1990s, greater attention has been paid in to aboriginal women’s activism in both Canadian and American urban centres. Interestingly, much of this recent literature does not presume

³³ Joan A. Weibel Orlando, “Introduction,” *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 27 Nos. 3 and 4 (2003) 499.

³⁴ Howard Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*, 576.

that urbanization began in the 1960s, but draws from a long history of urbanization dating to the early twentieth century. Reflected in this more recent literature, there has also been a growing recognition of the use of tradition in facilitating urban development. While there is a growing body of literature that addresses the American urbanization experience and the significance of this on the development of urban aboriginal organizations, there is still scant literature acknowledging the Canadian experience, aboriginal contributions, and women's assistance to organizational development. This suggests that a more complete analysis of the history of pre-1960 urban development in the Canadian context needs to be conducted. This study of the expression of tradition by Saskatoon Métis women in urban development adds to the body of literature that addresses urban aboriginal institutional development and aboriginal women's activism in Canada.

CHAPTER TWO

“SHE HAD NOTHING TO OFFER”: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCHING MÉTIS WOMEN

In order to examine how nineteenth century Métis traditions were expressed in post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism, a combination of archival and oral history research methods were employed. Interviews with Métis individuals provided genealogical information and helped to provide personal perspectives on the experience of urban development and efforts to build and create urban organizations. A survey of records, such as nineteenth century Métis scrip applications, census records and Saskatchewan homestead records, also provided genealogical information. A survey of archival records collected by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI), F.L. Barron, Robert Doucette, Saskatoon City Council, and the Saskatoon Community Liaison Committee, including newspapers and periodicals such as *NewBreed Magazine* and *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* articles helped to elucidate the development and evolution of urban organizations. As the research was being conducted, familial patterns began to emerge that spoke to nineteenth century Métis community formation and the importance of women's kinship in these communities that could be linked to nineteenth century political structures such as buffalo hunt brigades. Through a combination of oral history, archival and documentary research methods it became apparent that the creation of more detailed genealogies would be necessary for an examination of community and political structures. As a result, genealogical reconstruction became the primary methodological approach in examining

how nineteenth century Métis traditions have been expressed in post-1930 urban development in Saskatoon.

Understanding Métis Political Structures through Genealogical Reconstruction

Reconstructing family genealogies is a growing research method often employed by scholars of Métis history as a means to explore expressions of Métis social, cultural and economic traditions. However, while family genealogies are increasingly being used to understand these contexts, little attempt has been made to use this method in examining Métis political structures and traditions. Additionally, not much attention has been paid to the role of women in these political structures. As a result, this study reconstructs family genealogies of Saskatoon Métis in an attempt to fill the gap in scholarship that examines the role of women and family in nineteenth and early twentieth century Métis political structures and traditions.

Historians Jennifer S.H. Brown, Brenda Macdougall and Heather Devine have demonstrated the usefulness of genealogical reconstruction in examining nineteenth century Métis social, cultural and economic traditions. Brown argues for the importance of this methodology and acknowledges that much “more detailed family histories could bring out important conclusions regarding the development of Métis society in the nineteenth century.”¹ She indicates that examining family genealogies is particularly important when researching Métis women. According to Brown, “in order to better examine women’s roles in Métis communities we need examine genealogical connections

¹ Jennifer S.H. Brown. “Women as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 3 no. 1 (1983), 39.

between families and reevaluate the strength of female kinship in determining community boundaries and contexts.”² Brown proposes that,

We should inquire whether native women in emergent Métis groups looked for and found ways to maintain this organizational bias in their own family groups. To what extent did women form the consistent nuclei of such groups? To what extent did biracial families later trace ancestry through women, or at least back to a female apical ancestor who represented in herself the meeting of races that founded a new lineage?³

Macdougall, in her examination of northwest Saskatchewan Métis families, suggests that studies of Métis communities such as Ile a la Crosse must also begin at the family level.⁴

By reconstructs the genealogies of forty-three family networks within the Ile a la Crosse region, Macdougall demonstrates the important role of women in bringing outsider males into the community through marriage and serves to contextualize the broader social responsibilities created by familial and economic alliances. Devine, in her study of the Desjarlais family from the late 1600s to the beginning of the twentieth century, also argues the usefulness of genealogical reconstruction in providing a framework for detailed family studies. Through genealogical reconstruction, Devine was able to

identify kin groupings, to postulate sociopolitical alliances, to track migration of Métis individuals and extended families into different regions, to examine the socioeconomic status of these families over time, and to trace the process of acculturation as they responded to changing socioeconomic circumstances and adopted Indian, Métis, or Euro-Canadian modes of behavior to survive.⁵

² Brown, *Women*, 39.

³ Brown, *Women*, 40.

⁴ Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis Communities,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 87 no. 3 (2006), 462.

⁵ Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004) 13.

Using these methods she was then able to use a variety of archival and secondary sources to contextualize the Desjarlais family within a broader social, economic and political context.⁶

Genealogical Reconstruction to Examine Post-1930 Urban Development, Governance and Political Activism.

The family genealogies that were created for this study span the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were largely informed by research gathered as part of an undergraduate Applied Research Course in Native Studies. In this course, I conducted archival research and a series of oral interviews with individuals who were the last generation of Métis to have been born or live at Round Prairie prior to their move to Saskatoon.⁷ General in nature, the intent of these interviews was to gather information on the social, economic and cultural history of Round Prairie Métis prior to and shortly after their move to the city. Through this process, a large amount of genealogical information was gathered that was later used to support the creation of family genealogies for this study. When I entered a graduate program, I continued to participate in this course as a research assistant and course tutor. This experience helped to further expand my understanding of the community and to focus my thesis research. The interviews I conducted, my preliminary archival and documentary research, and the documentary and archival research collected by other undergraduate and graduate students of this course now form a collection held by the University of Saskatchewan's Native Studies Department. In this study, the student research collection will be referred to here as the

⁶ Devine, *Own Themselves*, 15.

⁷ When I took this course, undergraduate students were not required to have ethics approval for doing research. As a student of Native Studies, cultural protocols for researching in Aboriginal communities were understood and were followed.

“Round Prairie Project.” This collection includes Saskatchewan Homestead records of numerous community members, Métis scrip applications and census returns. While quite extensive, this collection tends to focus on the history of the Round Prairie community prior to their move to Saskatoon, with some research that focuses on political organization and institutional development in their very early years in the city. Although time consuming, a large amount of genealogical information was extracted from this collection. As a result, this collection was a useful starting point for both genealogical reconstruction and for a more thorough documentary and archival search of post-1930 urban development. Genealogical data gathered from the Round Prairie Project was supported by a review of published genealogical resources such as Gail Morin’s *Métis Families: A Genealogical Compendium* and D. N. Sprague and R.P. Frye’s *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* as well as a thorough search of secondary sources relating to Métis women and communities.⁸ Efforts were also made to compare genealogical information with available archival documents such as birth records, census and Métis scrip records. This helped to ensure accuracy in relationships between individuals when creating the family genealogies.

For this study, genealogical reconstruction informed a better understanding of nineteenth century Métis family, community and political structures. The genealogies were useful for examining connections between individuals and families, for examining nineteenth century female kinship relationships and for understanding the significance of women within this community. They were useful in defining the bounds of the

⁸ Gail Morin, *Métis Families: A Genealogical Compendium*. [CD-ROM]. (Orange Park, Florida: Quinton Publications, 2001); and, D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983).

community prior to becoming urban and demonstrate that family organization patterns were central in nineteenth century community organization and in political structures such as the buffalo hunt brigades.

Genealogies were necessary for identifying how traditions of family and community were defined in terms of twentieth century urban development and how they were applied in an urban context. They proved useful for contextualizing individual and family histories within the city and were useful in identifying connections between community leaders and those active in the development of political organizations. They were useful in elucidating patterns of extended family and in demonstrating the interconnectedness of the Saskatoon Métis community. Collectively, these family genealogies demonstrate that Métis concepts of family and tradition remain the underlying organizational concept employed by post-1930 Métis communities and political structures.

Oral History Methods in Researching Métis Urban Development, Governance and Political Activism

In an attempt to capture personal perspectives on the experience of urban development and efforts to build and create urban institutions it was determined that oral history interviews with individuals that had been socially and politically active in Saskatoon's post-1930 urban Métis community would be necessary. Historian James LaGrand, argues that oral history methodologies such as interviews can be particularly useful in the study urban Aboriginal people. According to LaGrand, oral histories "have the potential to give ordinary and representative Indian people a voice, providing both

scholars and the Indian community valuable first-person narratives on recent American Indian history.”⁹

Similarly, feminist scholars Kathryn Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack and Judith Wittner argue the importance of oral histories in researching women. According to these authors, women’s experiences have been “suppressed, trivialized, ignored or reduced to the status of gossip and folk wisdom by dominant research traditions institutionalized in academic settings and in scientific disciplines.”¹⁰ They suggest, however, that because women’s experiences have been significantly different than men’s, oral history can be used to “incorporate the previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the past and of the present.”¹¹ They argue, that “when women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden realities: new experiences and new perspectives emerge that challenge the ‘truths’ of official accounts and cast doubt upon established theories.”¹² From the perspective of these feminist scholars,

the oral interview not only allows women to articulate their own experiences but also to reflect upon the meaning of those experiences to them. It provides a picture of how a woman understands herself within her world, where and how she places value, and what particular meanings she attaches to her actions and locations in the world.¹³

They conclude, if researchers are to reconstruct historical accounts of society by seriously including women, “we must begin to situate each individual woman’s life story in its specific social and historical setting and show how women’s actions and consciousness

⁹ James B. LaGrand, “Whose Voices Count? Oral Sources and Twentieth-Century American Indian History,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27:1 (1997) 74.

¹⁰ Kathryn Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack and Judith Wittner, “Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History,” *Oral History Review* 15 Spring (1987): 106.

¹¹ Anderson et al., *Beginning Where We Are*, 104.

¹² Anderson et al., *Beginning Where We Are*, 104.

¹³ Anderson et al., *Beginning Where We Are*, 114.

contribute to the structuring of social institutions.”¹⁴ To do this, “we need to go directly to women to learn about their part in the production and reproduction of society. We cannot have adequate theories of society without them.”¹⁵

The identified usefulness of oral history methodologies in researching urban Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal women specifically, made interviews with Métis women essential to gaining a greater understanding of the application and resilience of tradition in the development of contemporary political organizations. As well, understanding that few Métis organizations hold extensive records of their own organizational beginnings or that documentary evidence that speaks specifically to women’s activism rarely exists in archival collections, the necessity of conducting participant interviews and collecting oral histories was intensified. Interviews were also necessary to determine if individuals within the Métis community held private collections of documentary evidence.

Interviews were conducted with Métis women who had been socially and politically active in the post-1930 Saskatoon Métis community, or with individuals whose families have a history of activism within the city. While most of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the interview, some were also referred by community members and those still working in urban institutions. Most participants tended to be elderly and some were hesitant to be interviewed. After contacting each of them, only three of the seven individuals contacted consented to be interviewed. Two declined to participate because they felt their age and health problems would prevent them from taking part. The third declined to participate after the initial meeting because of health

¹⁴ Anderson et al., *Beginning Where We Are*, 119.

¹⁵ Anderson et al., *Beginning Where We Are*, 119.

concerns but also because she felt she “had nothing to contribute” despite the acknowledgment of her efforts by other participants and community members and evidence in the documentary and archival research of her contribution to these institutions. This individual’s perception of her own contribution as insignificant is not surprising considering the devaluation of women’s contributions to social and political development as evidenced by a review of recent literature such as John Weinstein’s *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism*, and the meager acknowledgement of women’s efforts found within the documentary record. In his recent work, Weinstein provides an in-depth examination of provincial and national Métis political organization in the late twentieth century. He details the efforts of numerous male Métis leaders such as Alberta’s Elmer Ghostkeeper and Saskatchewan’s Jim Sinclair and Harry Daniels, but provides next to no mention, or examination, of women’s political efforts at the local, provincial or national level. The only reference to women’s efforts is one brief sentence stating that in Alberta women did play a role in political organization at the local level, and did not get involved at the provincial or national level until the 1990s.¹⁶ Weinstein’s oversight suggests that women’s contributions in political organization have in fact been devalued, and thus require more investigation.

Of the individuals that participated in this research, two were both politically and socially involved in the institutions being studied and today are recognized as Elders by the community. The third participant was the daughter to one of the community leaders in Saskatoon during the 1960s-80s. She was actively involved in these institutions during the 1970s-80s with her father and remains involved today. While few in number, these interviews formed a significant contribution to the research, as they proved to hold much

¹⁶ Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West*, 145.

of the historical record related to these organizations and they could all speak to how Métis traditions were utilized in the creation and operation of urban organizations. It may have been possible to seek out additional participants who were also involved in institutional development during this time, but I determined, with the help of participants and community members with whom I had already spoken, that those individuals that could best speak to the topic had already been contacted, were already participating, or were deceased. It was then determined by the researcher that no additional interviews would be necessary as they would have been with individuals that had limited involvement in the development or operation of Saskatoon Métis organizations.

Interviews were then conducted according to the ethical standards set out by the University of Saskatchewan. However, efforts were also made to follow recognized culturally appropriate protocols for researching in Métis communities such as acknowledging the value of the information shared with the researcher by offering a small gift to the participant. This degree of compensation was not sufficient to act as a coercion to participate in the study, and did not infringe on any ethical considerations set out by the University. Efforts were also made to establish a rapport, build trust, and introduce the participant to the research. Native Studies scholar, Yale Belanger, argues in “Issues of Developing Relationships in Native American Studies” that, while time consuming, building these kinds of trust relationships with communities and community members is essential when conducting research in Aboriginal communities.¹⁷ According to Belanger, “by focusing on relationship and introducing oneself to community residents, camaraderie thereby develops allowing for trust and the flow of ideas to

¹⁷ Yale Belanger, “Issues of Developing Relationships in Native American Studies,” in *Native Voices in Research*, ed. Jill Oakes, Rick Riewe, Kimberly Wilde, Alison Edmunds and Alison Dubois (Winnipeg: Aboriginal Issues Press, 2003) 211-221.

originate, further allowing for a truly reciprocal relationship to evolve.”¹⁸ In conducting this study, following these types of culturally appropriate research protocols proved to be essential in accessing interview participants and in ensuring they were at ease with the researcher, the questions being asked, and the technology being used.

The time taken to establish a trust relationship with the participants was essential to the success of the interview process. Participants were generally receptive to the open-ended questions, willing to share their stories and eager to share personal photographs and papers, often lending them to the researcher. These personal collections, while not available to the general public, helped to fill in the gap in the historical record that speaks to the expression and resilience of tradition in urban development, governance and political activism. The interviews also allowed for the collection of family history and genealogical information that proved essential in the reconstruction of family relationships as they relate to the development of these institutions. Had very rigid questions been asked, and participants not permitted a degree of flexibility in how they answered, it is likely that this information would not have been collected.

Formal interviews were conducted using open-ended questions in an informally structured questionnaire. The interview questions were created in two categories. First, introductory questions to examine Métis relocation to the city of Saskatoon and second, questions to analyze social and political institutions and services available to, and created by Métis people during these years. The questions that focused on the relocation experience were to identify: when, and why Métis people relocated; if there was a visible Aboriginal presence in the city or sense of Aboriginal community when relocating; how Aboriginal people were identifying themselves; and, if there were any types of services

¹⁸ Belanger, *Developing Relationships*, 214.

available that may have prompted or accommodated their relocation. The second series of questions sought to identify: the kinds of services available for Métis people; the kinds of services that were created; how were they created; who was involved in the creation and delivery these services; and, how successful they were in meeting the community's needs.

The open-ended nature of the questionnaire proved useful to both the researcher and participant. The questions allowed the participants the latitude to answer in their own way, often in the form of a story that contained names of family members, dates and connections between families. This was particularly important when themes started to emerge around the significant contribution Métis women made to institutional development through a continuation of their traditional roles and when examining genealogical patterns between and among families prior to, and after, becoming urban. The open-ended nature of the questions further allowed the researched to explore these kinds of ideas as they became apparent during the interview process.

Interviews followed the same structure for each participant. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours and took place in the participant's home. The choice of interview length and location for the interview was strategic, as I wanted the participant to feel at ease and open to sharing during the interview. Because of the timeframe being studied, it was expected that participants would also be elderly, so extra efforts were made to accommodate individuals within their homes and at a time of day when they felt most alert, comfortable, and prepared. Being in the participant's home also helped to trigger memories, provide the opportunity for the participant to discuss family photographs and papers and the opportunity for the researcher to inquire about available

private collections of papers held by the participants or their families. On two occasions, participants stopped the interview to retrieve personal documents, newspaper clippings, photographs and mementos, which have contributed greatly to the research. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher. These transcripts are stored at the Native Studies Department, University of Saskatchewan.

Documentary and Archival Research

Having conducted personal interviews and being familiar with the Round Prairie Project Collection, I was potentially aware of where additional documentary records that would be useful to this study were located. I began by surveying provincial and municipal public archives and libraries, such as the Saskatchewan Archives Board, the City of Saskatoon Archives, the University of Saskatchewan Special Collections and the Saskatoon Public Library seeking additional information on urban development not gathered as part of the Round Prairie Project. After a comprehensive search, it was determined that some documentary evidence of these organizations exists within these repositories. However, it was predominately newspaper articles, which contained only scant reference to the community's leaders and/or organizations. I then began to survey urban Aboriginal organizations and Métis specific organizations such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research.

Documentary and archival collections that proved relevant to my research included the collection of F. Laurie Barron held by the University of Saskatchewan Special Collections Library. Collected by Barron, who researched the late Premier Tommy Douglas' treatment of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal people in the 1940s, these records helped to explain the history and development of the Métis Society of

Saskatchewan, including the organization of the Saskatoon Métis Society in the late 1930s. They further helped to contextualize the politicization of the Saskatoon Métis community within the larger provincial Métis political movement.

Also thought to be relevant to this study were the records of Robert Doucette, the current provincial president of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MNS). An extensive collection held by the Saskatchewan Archives Board, the Doucette Papers relate primarily to the work of the MNS beginning in the 1980s rather than to the history of the organization or its predecessors, the Métis Society of Saskatchewan and the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. As the collection addresses a different timeframe than this study, it was determined to be of little value to this research.

However, combined with the context provided by Barron's collection, Doucette's collection did help to identify approximately when the name of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan changed its name to the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan and then to the MNS. I was then able to adjust research search terms accordingly.

Saskatoon City Council meeting minutes and records of the city's Community Liaison Committee were also reviewed. Many of these had previously been reviewed as part of the Round Prairie Project but still proved useful in determining Métis community participation in city affairs. Numerous references to these institutions and to community leaders were found in City Council Meeting minutes from the 1960s-70s, including a response to a public petition against the Native Alcohol Council locating a treatment facility within a residential neighborhood. Records such as these can begin to shed light on the challenges these organizations faced in their formative years. The records kept by

the Community Liaison Committee also proved useful, as members and leaders of the Métis community sat on this committee. These records helped to contextualize Métis political activism within municipal affairs.

It was thought that at the City of Saskatoon Archives, papers of former Mayor Bert Sears would prove useful to the research, should they exist. Rita Schilling, in her examination of Métis urban development in Saskatoon identified that Sears was known to have had close personal relationships with many of the Métis community's leaders prior to, and during, his tenure as mayor.¹⁹ As a result, he supported many of the organizational developments in the Métis community. Unfortunately the City of Saskatoon Archives does not routinely collect records from former civic officials and, therefore, no such records were located.

Efforts were also made to try and locate within public archives, the records collected for Rita Schilling's *Gabriel's Children* (1983) and Edgar J. Dosman's *Indians: The Urban Dilemma* (1972). It was thought, should they exist, these collections would prove useful because of their focus on urbanization and urban development in Saskatoon. Schilling's work discusses at some length the Saskatoon Métis community's first years in the city and their efforts in politicizing the community. In her work, she indicates that community leader Clarence Trotchie worked alongside her in compiling her research and in conducting interviews with community members. Dosman's work included a discussion on the Aboriginal social and political organizations in Saskatoon in the late 1960s and 1970s, and discusses, at length, the urbanization process. Unfortunately, neither data collection could be located.

¹⁹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 152.

Overall, these archival records surveyed helped to create a better understanding of the development and evolution of urban organizations in Saskatoon. They helped to contextualize the efforts of Saskatoon Métis within the larger provincial Métis community. They helped to contextualize the efforts of Saskatoon Métis within municipal affairs and shed some light on the challenges these organizations faced in their early years. Unfortunately, these collections added little to our understanding of Métis traditions and how these traditions were adapted and applied in an urban context.

The newspaper clippings collection gathered by the Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room however, is one exception. A repository of local community history, they have made a significant effort to collect photographs and newspaper articles relating to the city and its prominent citizens and leaders. While no photographs of these organizations or Métis community leaders were specifically collected, numerous newspaper articles were found that related to organizations such as the Native Alcohol Centre and Métis community leader, Clarence Trotchie. These newspaper articles helped to inform an understanding of urban development and began to acknowledge the activism of individual leaders. They also served as a starting point for a broader, more comprehensive newspaper search that included the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, *The Regina Leader Post* and *NewBreed Magazine*. Using the Saskatchewan Newspaper Index, a more extensive newspaper search of the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* and *The Regina Leader Post* was conducted. This index is available online through the University of Saskatchewan Library. Using general search terms such as “Métis”, or “Métis Society” returned a significant number of newspaper articles. These were then sorted by relevance according to the story’s headline. Within these sources, evidence was found of urban development

and Métis community leaders. Many of which, began to identify the significance of tradition, family, and community within these organizations. In the *Star Phoenix* several useful articles relating to the Saskatoon Métis community, its formal leaders and organizations were found beginning in the 1960s, with sporadic reference prior to this time. Perhaps most useful to this study were those published in *NewBreed* Magazine. Housed at GDI, this periodical began in the 1970s under the direction of the provincial Métis Society of Saskatchewan. This magazine was used as a tool to communicate important issues and events to the Métis public and included regular news updates from established Métis Locals and updates on the programs and services provided by Métis organizations across the province including the Native Alcohol Council. *Newbreed* Magazine can be searched using the general search index on GDI's online repository, The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (www.métismuseum.ca). However, this proved quite time consuming, and so a physical search of the collection was done at the office of GDI, rather than to access the sources online.

Several Aboriginal institutions were also surveyed to determine if they had collected any records relating to urban their formative years. These institutions included: the provincial offices of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan; the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research; the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (previously named the Native Alcohol Council); SaskNative Housing; the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre; Métis Local 11; and, the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. The largest Métis local in Saskatoon, membership of the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. includes numerous individuals whose families were, and still are, politically active in the Métis community and instrumental in the development of the

urban Aboriginal organizations. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, little effort had been made to document this history.

The educational affiliate of the MNS, the Gabriel Dumont Institute holds an extensive archival collection of interviews with Métis community members. Most useful to this study is the collection of interviews gathered by the Native Women's Association of Saskatchewan and the Batoche Centenary Committee as part of the "Métis Oral History Project." Conducted in 1984, this collection attempts to document general life histories and experiences of older Métis community members, including some individuals that were socially and politically active in Saskatoon such as Ron Camponi, Irene Dimick, Marjorie Laframboise, Kay Mazer, and Clarence Trotchie. Unfortunately, these interviews are not without weaknesses. They were conducted by community members with little or no training in qualitative interview techniques and as a result they are riddled with interruptions and closed-ended questions, making the interviews very structured. It also appears that the interview participants were provided very little latitude to answer questions how they wanted and to provide more than a few sentences in answering each question. This demonstrated lack of understanding in qualitative interview techniques served to severely limit the amount of information gathered. However, collectively these interviews with Saskatoon Métis provide some documentary evidence of the development and evolution of the organizations being studied and can help to they can help to contextualize social and cultural life during the transition to an urban environment. Perhaps more importantly, much can be garnered from the interviews with Métis women who have begun to document their own experiences in socially and politically organizing their community. These interviews can also help to provide

genealogical information useful to this study. While the interviews do not ask specific genealogical or family history questions, by piecing together bits of data gathered after a thorough examination of the documents, a picture the community organized along familial lines begins to emerge and becomes useful in examining the use of tradition in the development of Métis social and political institutions.

A second set of interviews held by GDI entitled “Métis Political Activists” also proved useful to this study. Collected in 2005 these interviews offer additional insight into the politicization of the Saskatchewan Métis community from the 1960s-80s with some reference to the urban experience in Saskatoon. Unfortunately, only one woman is interviewed and as a result, this collection while, beginning to provide perspective into the role of women in urban development, significantly overlooks the significance of families in organizing their community.

These GDI interview collections, together with the interviews conducted as part of the “Round Prairie Project” provided much data to contextualize the individual efforts of Métis women in institutional development. They helped to recreate genealogical connections between individuals and families and help to shape the theoretical perspective that Métis women from this community continued to fill roles that were consistent with the roles they played in traditional Métis communities.

Conclusion

Collectively, the oral history and archival research methods used in this study have helped to create a context for understanding urban migration of the Round Prairie community and their transition and adaptation to an urban environment. They have also helped to expand our understanding of Métis institutional development in Saskatoon and

to recognize the significant contribution Métis women made to these institutions. This has largely been accomplished by the creation of extensive family genealogies of Saskatoon Métis families. Overall, these genealogies demonstrate that nineteenth century Métis concepts of family and tradition remain the underlying organizational concept employed by post-1930 Métis communities and political structures.

CHAPTER THREE

MÉTIS WOMEN'S ROLES IN NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Nineteenth Century Buffalo Hunt Economy

Round Prairie Métis families had ties to the Red River Settlement and a plains buffalo hunting lifestyle. Historian Gerhard Ens argues that the identity of Red River Métis families was not tied to biology, blood or religion but to the economic and social role they played in the Red River Settlement.¹ Economic opportunity in the Red River Settlement was directly linked to the role Métis had played fur trade occupations such as freighting, hunting and trading. By the late 1840s, the demand for buffalo robes was increasing, which, according to Ens, helped to cause the Red River economy to shift from the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly-driven fur trade in which Métis provided their labour, to a capitalist market created by demand for buffalo robes.² In this shifting economy, Red River Métis families increasingly looked to buffalo hunting and the manufacture of buffalo robes and leather goods to assert their independence, distance themselves from the Company and to economically provide for themselves and their families. This shift included a change in lifestyle that included relying less on the Red

¹Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland; The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 4. Notable recent works that speak to the history of Métis people as buffalo hunters during this time period include: Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland; The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John E. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. MacLeod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001) 179-192.; and, Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

² Ens, *Homeland*, 72.

River Settlement and moving westward as life hunting buffalo on the prairies became economically viable for Métis families and communities.

This buffalo hunting lifestyle impacted the Métis economy, influenced social organization and was one of the earliest forms of Métis governance and political structure. Métis families generally organized themselves into extended family bands or communities that then became hunting brigades. The head of the family was regarded as the leader of the brigade. Each year, these individual family-based brigades gathered at Red River with hundreds of other Métis, before embarking on an annual summer hunt. These annual hunts were highly organized, with elected leadership and strict rules to govern the hunt. In 1840, Red River's first historian, Alexander Ross witnessed a summer hunt and described the expedition in great detail noting that it included over 1600 men, women and children.³ Importantly, he described the processes and structures for governing the hunt. According to Ross, prior to embarking on the hunt, a council meeting was held to set rules for the expedition and elect captains and officers for the hunt.⁴ This process provided a highly organized way for individual Métis hunting brigades to come together with other brigades under leadership that was appointed democratically and whose authority was understood and respected.

Over time, it became the custom for many Métis to not return to Red River after the summer hunt, but to spend the winter on the western plains in wintering camps close to the buffalo's anticipated winter range and where there was access to food and water.⁵ According to Ens,

³ Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972) 248

⁴ Ross, *Red River Settlement*, 248.

⁵ Ens, *Homeland*, 77-78.

beginning in the late 1840s and accelerating throughout the 1850s-1860s, Métis wintering or *hivernant* communities multiplied west of Red River and Pembina...[Increasingly] more plains Métis families began spending their winters in small temporary communities in the Turtle Mountains, the Souris Valley, the Qu'Appelle Valley, at Wood Mountain and in the Saskatchewan River area. Here buffalo were generally plentiful during the winter.⁶

Bound together by kinship and economics, many family hunting brigades began to settle year round in their wintering camps by the 1870s, creating permanent settlements structured along extended family.⁷

Round Prairie – A Buffalo Hunt Community

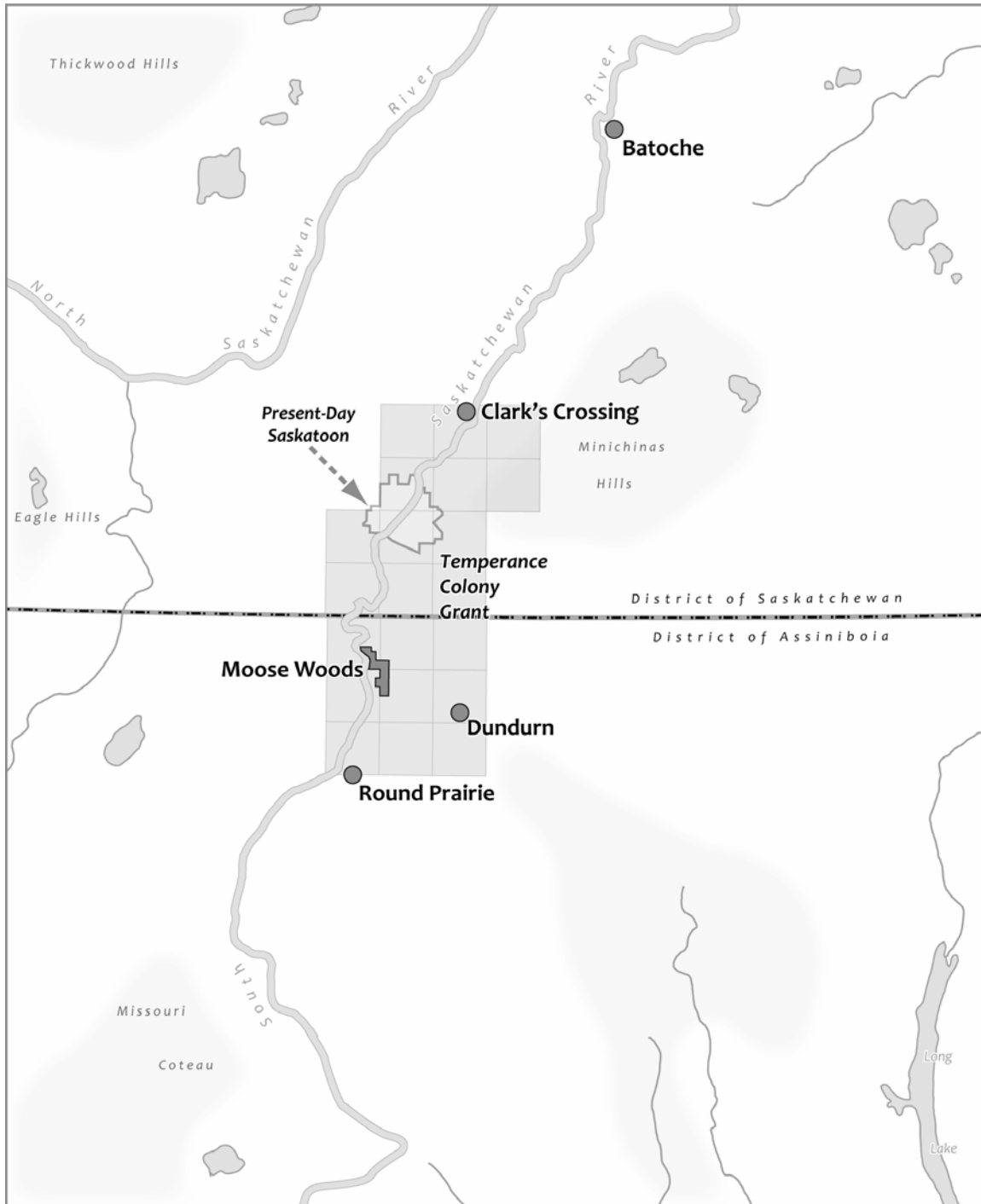
Organized along social, economic and political lines similar to other Métis communities, Charles Trottier and his hunting party began wintering at a site called Round Prairie in the 1850s. (see Figure 1) The site of Round Prairie is located on the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River approximately 40 kilometers south of present day Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. More specifically it is situated between the town of Dundurn to the south and Whitecap Dakota First Nation to the north. The community of Round Prairie predates the town of Dundurn which was not settled until the early 1900s, following the arrival of the railroad in 1889. Also instrumental in the settlement of Dundurn was Minnesota Senator Emil J. Mielicke, who moved to the Dundurn area and then convinced a number of his friends from the State to follow and to take up agriculture.⁸

⁶ Ens, *Homeland*, 77-78.

⁷ Ens, *Homeland*, 77-79.

⁸ Town of Dundurn Website. <http://www.townofdundurn.ca/profile.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009).

Figure 1. Map of Round Prairie Area c. 1885



The site of Round Prairie, much like the site of Whitecap Dakota First Nation, is located in territory that at different times has been dominated by Gros Ventres, Assiniboiné, and Plains Cree.⁹ Fur trade historian Arthur J. Ray indicates that the south Saskatchewan River area where both Round Prairie and Moose Woods were located, was by the early 1800s largely Assiniboiné territory.¹⁰ By 1821, however, the Assiniboiné had largely moved southward out of the Saskatchewan Region, and by the 1850s were primarily found in southern Saskatchewan and Montana. As they vacated this area, Ray argues that Plains Cree began to move into the area.¹¹ However, by the 1850s, Métis buffalo hunters, such as Trottier's band, were also moving into the area. As a result, it can be argued that the area was both Cree and Métis territory as both groups lived there mutually because of kinship relationships created through intermarriage.

By the late 1860s, the nature of these tribal territories was once again shifting as Dakota, led by Chief Whitecap were moving into the South Saskatchewan River region. Whitecap's band, along with Chief Standing Buffalo and his band had first come to Canada in the early 1860s seeking refuge from political upheaval in Minnesota.¹² In the late 1860s, Whitecap's band left southern Saskatchewan and moved north to the site they now occupy which was then called Moose Woods. Recognized by the Dakota as once being traditional Sioux territory, historian Peter Doug Elias argues that Whitecap and his followers were fully aware that they were moving into what was then Cree and Métis territory.¹³ And, when they first came to Moose Woods they were not unfamiliar with

⁹ Whitecap Dakota First Nation, "History," 5. (accessed March 9, 2009).

¹⁰ Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) 183-184.

¹¹ Ray, *Indians*, 84.

¹² Whitecap Dakota First Nation, "History," 5.

¹³ Peter Douglas Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest: Lessons For Survival*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2002) 29.

Cree or Métis people. Elias identifies that prior to moving into the area, the Dakota they had negotiated peace with the Cree.¹⁴ While, historian William Morton argues that Métis victory over the Sioux at the Battle of Grand Coteau in 1851 ended any long-standing disputes and creates peace between these long-time adversaries.¹⁵ As a result, it is even possible that by the time Whitecap and his followers had settled at Moose Woods they already had some kinship relationships formed with the Métis families at Round Prairie. As, prior to coming to the Saskatchewan River area, Whitecap's band had hunted buffalo with Métis in southern Saskatchewan around Fort Ellice, in the Qu'Appelle Valley and in the Turtle Mountains of Manitoba.¹⁶ While evidence has not been found to suggest that Whitecap's band and the Round Prairie Métis did in fact hunt together, we do know that the Round Prairie Métis also frequently traveled to, and perhaps even hunted, into the Qu'Appelle Valley area. Regardless, when they settled at Moose Woods, the Dakota quickly began trading and intermarrying with their Métis neighbours. Catholic priest Father Jules le Chevalier described the site of Round Prairie in the 1850s-60s, noting that

one of the most frequented areas was 'la Prairie Ronde', near Moosewoods. Because of its succulent grasses, numerous springs and protection from the North Winds, this wooded area was a favorite wintering ground of the buffalo. By 1858, there could be found old cabins built by the Métis that came to Moosewoods to trade with the Indians and simply live with them during the winter. In 1863, a small village of some 40 cabins had taken shape.¹⁷

Interestingly Chevalier begins to describe the social and economic interaction between the Round Prairie Métis and the Moose Woods Dakota.

¹⁴ Elias, *The Dakota* 29.

¹⁵ William Morton, "The Battle of Grand Coteau: July 13 and 14, 1851," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions*, Series 3, 1959-60 Season. www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/grandcoteau.shtml (accessed December 9, 2009).

¹⁶ Elias, *The Dakota*, 31-32.

¹⁷ Father Jules le Chevalier, *le Patriote de l'Ouest*, 14 July 1937 quoted in Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 10-11.

Charles Trottier himself left evidence of Métis settlement at Round Prairie. In 1903, he stated in a Saskatchewan Homestead declaration that he had taken up land at Round Prairie as early as 1855 when he was with his parents hunting buffalo on the plains. Further, he declared that he and his family continued to return to Round Prairie every winter until 1885.¹⁸ Métis buffalo hunter Norbert Welsh also documented the settlement of families at Round Prairie. In his memoirs, Welsh notes that Trottier's brigade continued to return to Round Prairie throughout the 1850s-60s. According to Welsh, one reason they returned each year was because they considered Round Prairie a "lucky place."¹⁹ He explains that it was considered lucky because "the buffalo used to winter and travel there more than any other place on the plains. It was near water and was a fine wintering ground. It was sheltered on the north and open to the south."²⁰

More importantly Welsh described the composition of Trottier's brigade wintering at Round Prairie. According to Welsh, who was a member of the brigade in 1865 and a member of Trottier's extended family, the brigade was comprised of about thirty families and included those headed by Charles Trottier, Antoine Trottier, Andre Trottier, Moise Landry, Louis Landry, Isadore Dumont, and Welsh.²¹ These families continued to travel seasonally from Red River to winter at Round Prairie until 1870 when, as noted by Schilling, "in the Spring of 1870, Charles Trottier, with a party of 25 families and 200 Red River carts, left Red River for the last time to settle at Round Prairie permanently."²²

¹⁸ Homestead Application Declaration of Charles Trottier, 17 December 1903. Saskatchewan Homestead Files No. 847742, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

¹⁹ Mary Weekes, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1994) 64.

²⁰ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 64.

²¹ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 37 and 45-72.

²² Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 31.

Métis Community and Family Structure

The extended family structure of Métis hunting brigades, including Trottier's brigade, established and reflected the communal values of the Métis, helped to secure resources, ensured that necessary economic, social and political roles were filled and provided for the transmission of traditions, values and worldview. Historian Diane Payment argues, that at Batoche extended families "were the basic feature of the Métis settlement and way of life."²³ Families tended to settle next to each other in "family cliques" and fathers would reserve land for their children next to their own, a settlement pattern many scholars argue was carried over from Red River.²⁴ Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall argued that other Métis communities, such as those in northwest Saskatchewan also followed this familial settlement pattern.²⁵ Perhaps then, this pattern is a trait borrowed from band societies. In Batoche however, Payment argues that

Gabriel's Crossing, Batoche, St. Laurent and St. Louis were largely distinguished by way of family networks or *cliques*: for example, the Vandals, Poitras and Fidlers around Gabriel's Crossing, the Parenteaus, Carons and Letendres of Batoche and the Bouchers, Lepines and Nolins of St. Louis. Kinship provided stability and ensured interaction in the community-oriented society.²⁶

This type of living arrangement, Payment notes, "gave the whole area...the character of a big family."²⁷ This living arrangement extended the network of those that could be relied on in times of need and served as a means to maintain of culture and tradition, making it easier for these families to adapt to their new environment.

²³ Diane Payment, "Batoche After 1885, A Society in Transition," in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*. Ed. F. Laurie Barron and James Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre), 176.

²⁴ John Elgin Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian West" in *Essays in Western History*, ed. L.H. Thomas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 76-78.

²⁵ Macdougall. *Wahkootowin*.

²⁶ Payment, *Batoche After 1885*, 176.

²⁷ Diane Payment, "*The Free People – Otipemisiwak*": *Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870-1930*. (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada, 1990), 38.

In examining extended family patterns, historian Jennifer S.H. Brown argues that it is important to examine residency patterns and family marriage patterns. According to Brown, Métis life was often influenced by women's kinship, so much so, that it "was characterized by matriorganization".²⁸ In examining Métis community formation and structure, Brown suggests that we should look for the tendency of a new husband to take up residence with his wife's family, at least temporarily, and we should watch for "tendencies of two or more sisters to maintain 'matrilocal' residence."²⁹ Payment provides support for Brown's argument of the strength of women's kinship in determining residency patterns. In her analysis of Batoche in the 1870s, Payment argues that a matrilocal pattern of settlement was often observed. For instance, Payment describes the residency pattern of the elderly widow Henriette Landry Dumas and her daughters Angélique, Marguerite, Christine and Geneviève at Batoche. According to Payment,

Angélique Dumas, who was married to Louis Letendre, settled near Batoche in 1872. Her sister Marguerite, Marguerite's husband, Jean Caron, and their family followed in 1878. In 1882, the youngest sister Christine (Mme Barthélemi Pilon), left St. Norbert (Manitoba) for Batoche, accompanied by her elderly widowed mother, Henriette Landry Dumas, and three brothers. Finally, in 1901, another sister Geneviève (Mme Joseph Ladéroute), also resided in close proximity to each other.³⁰

According to Payment, this pattern of female-led settlement was not uncommon with Batoche families, which further indicates that female kinship ties were significant when determining residency.

²⁸ Brown, *Women*, 39.

²⁹ Brown, *Women*, 42.

³⁰ Diane Payment, "La Vie en Rose?" Métis Women at Batoche 1870 to 1920," in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, ed. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996) 23.

The strength of women's kinship in determining residency patterns and community structure is also illustrated in the work of Martha Harroun Foster. In her examination of Métis bands or community organization in Montana, Foster demonstrated the significance of women's kinship ties in band formation and membership. She argues, that the,

Spring Creek band was not patriarchal in the sense of being organized around and controlled by related fathers and their sons. Although the political leaders were men, they did not determine the bands composition. The bonds provide by wives, sisters and daughters cemented the band and provided its form, flexibility and durability... Their experience suggests a bifocal, effectively bilineal system in which the kin of both spouses formed the threads of an interlocking kinship web.³¹

Further, she argues that,

Although scholars and commentators have often described Métis families as patriarchal and assumed that band formation centered on a male leader, his sons and their wives, this is not true of the Laverdure/Janeaux families. Janeaux became part of an extended family that included his wife's respected, elderly parents, her two sisters' families, and that of one brother. The senior Laverdure daughters' relationships to their father and brother, as well as their sisters, mother and niece (daughter) were as significant in determining band membership and residence as those of male members. Through female band members, the Laverdures allied themselves with two traders (Janeaux and his employee Paul Morase) and with at least three other Milk River families (Turcotte, Berger and Daignon). These marriages connected the Laverdures to many of the other Milk River families and to all of the families that would move south together to Spring Creek in the Judith Basin.³²

From Foster's argument, it is evident that sister groupings were significant for Métis families in the Spring Creek band of Montana when determining and maintaining community organization.

The female-centered structure of Métis communities, such as argued by Brown, Payment and Foster, is not specific to prairie-based Métis community organization, but

³¹ Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006) 82.

³² Foster, *Identity*, 69-71.

has also been applied to northern Métis communities. Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall, in her examination of the northwestern Saskatchewan community of Ile á la Crosse, demonstrates that female-centered family networks were significant in determining community structure and were directly related to the nineteenth century fur trade economy of the region. Beginning in the late eighteenth century with the arrival of outsider male fur trade employees to the region, Macdougall reconstructs the genealogies of forty-three core Métis families, tracing up to five generations of each family.

According to Macdougall,

there were clear attempts by the forty-three families to ally with one another, particularly those most closely associated with the HBC, through successive intergenerational intermarriage. This trend towards intermarriage – especially between HBC families – solidified the establishment of a community-based, inter-familial, intergenerational *wahkootowin* marked by regionally based, female-centred family networks with strong local patronymic connections by the early twentieth century.³³

Collectively, the arguments put forth by Brown, Payment, Foster and Macdougall articulate that much can be learned about Métis community structure and formation from a more thorough analysis of women's kinship ties. As a result, this method is useful in examining the Round Prairie Métis community.

Female Kinship Expressed in the Round Prairie Community

In applying Payment's, Brown's, Foster's and Macdougall's arguments for examining female kinship and genealogical connections between families, much is revealed about the social organization of Charles Trottier's hunting brigade and the

³³ Macdougall. *Wahkootowin*, 451. Macdougall defines the concept of *Wahkootowin* as a Cree cultural concept that lays out a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals. This term is used to express that family was the underlying organization concept employed by Métis in pursuing social, economic, political or cultural activities. In short, Macdougall argues, that family, as expressed through the concept of *wahkootowin*, was a 'style of life' for the Métis that reflected a shared cultural experience.

community structure of Round Prairie, particularly after Trottier's brigade established themselves there permanently. It is evident that from the early nineteenth century forward, that female kinship is the enduring organizational concept maintained by this community despite changes in economy, political upheaval and community movement and relocation. For instance, throughout the mid to late 1800s, Charles Trottier was recognized as head of this large extended family and leader of the community, stemming, most likely from his reputation as leader of the buffalo hunt.³⁴ But, upon closer inspection of genealogical connections we see that the network of community and extended family members has as its core, a group of sisters. Indeed, it is the underlying female kinship of Laframboise women that is the core of the Trottier band. As already noted, the 1850s-60s hunting brigade under the leadership of Charles Trottier included the families of Moise Landry, Louis Landry, Antoine Trottier, Andre Trottier, Isadore Dumont, and Norbert Welsh.³⁵ (see Figure 2) Using this list as a point of reference for examining family genealogies, supported by records of births at Round Prairie during the 1860s-70s, names of other individuals and families who lived in the community during this time can be extrapolated. (see Figure 3) Using available genealogical information, specifically examining the record of births that occurred at Round Prairie in the 1860s, it can be determined that the family of Pierre Sansregret, David Boyer and Francois Laframboise were also present. By the 1870s, the birth records indicate that the family of Jean Baptiste Laframboise, son of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry was also present, as well as Jean Baptiste Trottier, son of Basile Trottier and Madeline Fagnant. Likely, there were many other children born at Round Prairie in the 1860s-70s.

³⁴ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*.; Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*.

³⁵ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*.

Unfortunately, birthplace was not consistently recorded in the archival documents accessed to create the family genealogies. This served to limit the placement of additional families in the community throughout these years.

When analyzing the available genealogical data, familial patterns begin to emerge, which indicate that many of the men described as being members of Trottier's hunting brigade, or shown to have been present at Round Prairie in the 1860s-70s, can trace a connection to a core group of Laframboise women. For instance, Charles Trottier was married to Ursule Laframboise, Moise Landry was married to Philomene Laframboise, and Antoine Trottier was married to Angelique Laframboise.³⁶ All three of these women were the daughters of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry.³⁷ Isadore Dumont was married Louise Laframboise, sister to Jean Baptiste. Also a member of Trottier's brigade is Louis Landry. Louis Landry is perhaps the father of Moise Landry as archival records indicate that Moise Landry's parents are Louison Bouton Landry and Isabelle Chalifoux.³⁸ Family connections between these individuals are further solidified by the marriage of Norbert Welsh to Cecilia Boyer, whose mother was Madeline Trottier – the sister of Antoine, Andre and Charles.³⁹

³⁶ Morin, *Métis Families*.

³⁷ Morin, *Métis Families*.

³⁸ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 57.

³⁹ Morin, *Métis Families*.

Figure 2. Trottier's Hunting Brigade c. 1850s-60s

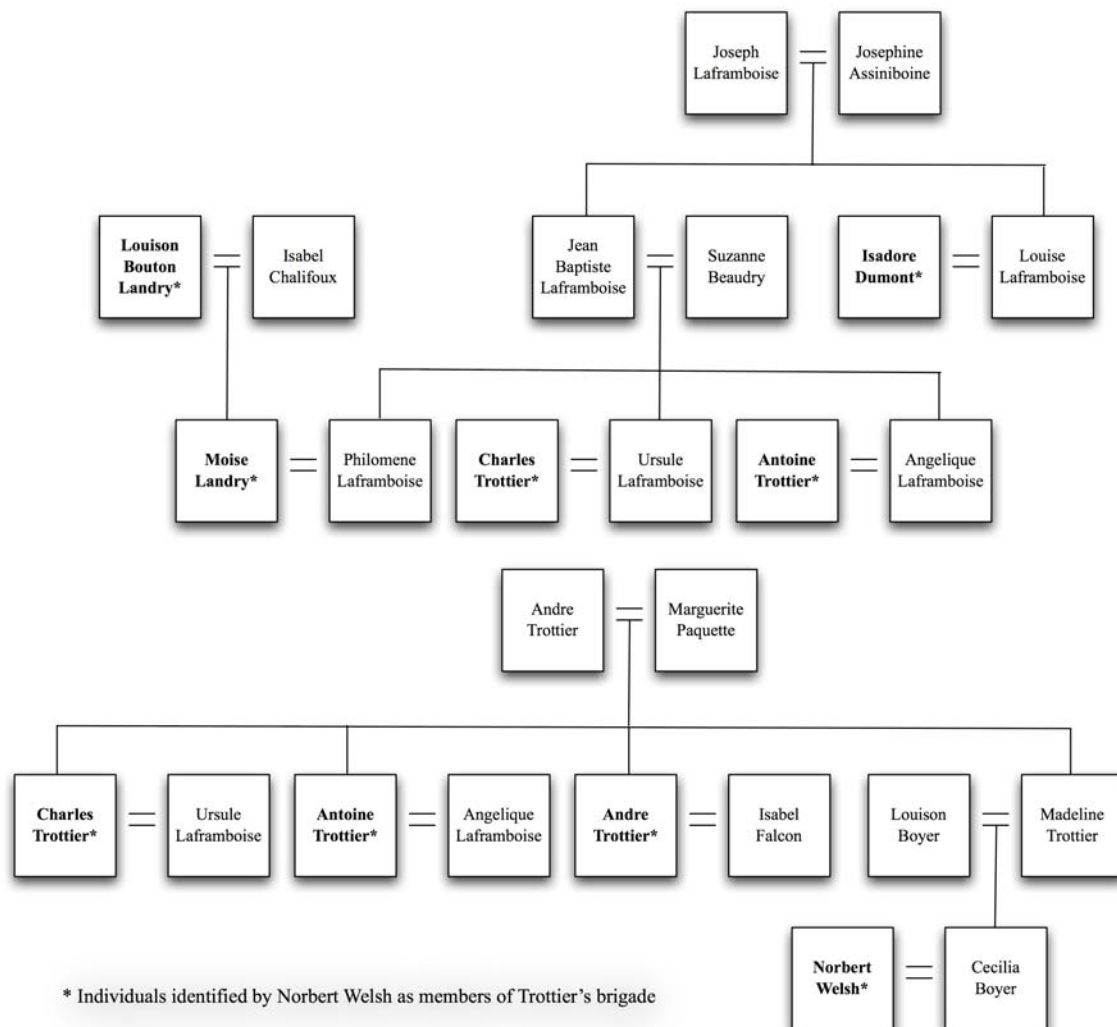
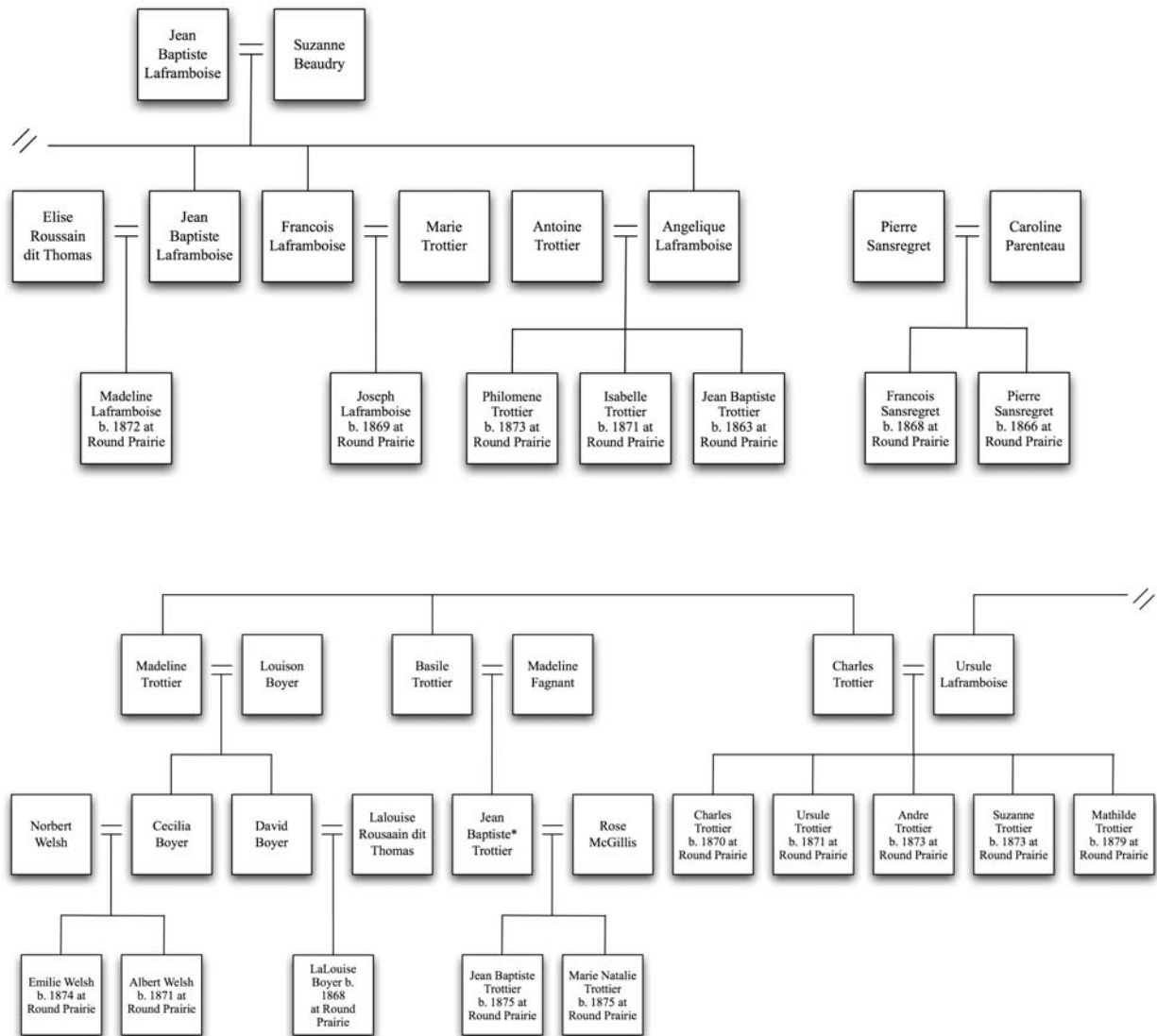


Figure 3. Children Born at Round Prairie c. 1860s-70s



By specifically examining the record of births for Round Prairie in the 1860s, it can be determined that the family of Pierre Sansregret, David Boyer and Francois Laframboise were also present. It is unclear from the genealogies how Pierre Sansregret is related to the community, but records do place him in the community as he and his

wife Caroline Parenteau had two children, Francois and Pierre, born at Round Prairie in the 1860s. David Boyer and his wife LaLouise Roussain dit Thomas were also part of the Round Prairie community by the 1860s because their daughter, LaLouise was born in the community in 1868. David Boyer was the son of Louison Boyer and Madeline Trottier, and brother to Cecilia Boyer, wife of Norbert Welsh. Madeline was the daughter of Andre Trottier and Marguerite Paquette, therefore sister to Charles, Antoine, Andre, Marguerite and Marie. LaLouise Roussain dit Thomas was sister to Elise, wife of Jean Baptiste Laframboise. Jean Baptiste was the son of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry. The family of Francois Laframboise, another son of Jean Baptiste and Suzanne can also be placed in the community in the 1860s-70s. Brother to Ursule, Philomene and Angelique, Francois was also married into the Trottier family. He was married to Marie Trottier, sister to Antoine, Andre, Charles and Madeline.⁴⁰ Marie passed away in 1867, and Francois married Louise Chaboyer. Francois and his new wife continued to live in the community after Marie's death, and they had at least one son, Joseph born in Round Prairie in 1869.

By the time the community begins to settle at Round Prairie year round in the early 1870s, some families such as those of Isadore Dumont and Norbert Welsh who had both married into the community leave to join other relatives around Batoche and in the Qu'Appelle Valley.⁴¹ The departure of Dumont and Welsh is perhaps an indication of the matrilineal tendency of this community where husbands that have married into a community often reside with their wife's family temporarily. Their departure is also

⁴⁰ Morin, *Métis Families*.

⁴¹ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*. 75-77.

evidence of the fluid boundaries of these groupings and the interconnectedness of a network of Métis communities.

The record of births for this time, however, indicate that the family of Jean Baptiste Laframboise, another son of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry was present, as well as Jean Baptiste Trottier, son of Basile Trottier and Madeline Fagnant. Jean Baptiste Laframboise and his wife Elise Roussain dit Thomas had at least one child born in the community. Their daughter Madeline Laframboise was born in 1872 in Round Prairie. Jean Baptiste Trottier and his wife Rose McGillis also had at least two children, Jean Baptiste and Marie Natalie, born in Round Prairie. It is likely that Jean Baptiste and Marie Natalie were twins, as they were both born in 1875.

An analysis of Saskatchewan Homestead records for the Round Prairie area indicates that in the early 1880s, Norbert Trottier, son of Antoine Trottier and Angelique Laframboise also lived in the community. A letter in his homestead application indicates that from 1880 to 1886 he “squatted” on land at Round Prairie. He indicates that at the time the land was surveyed in 1884, he was in residence there. He argues, that by the time the survey had been taken, that he had fulfilled the “all the duties required of a homesteader, both in the way of residence and improvements.”⁴² At the time, his residence included a house, two stables and eight horses. He also had four acres of land broken and had fenced eighty acres. He remained in residence in Round Prairie until 1886, when he indicates that he had to leave the community. According to Trottier, he “remained residence upon this land from 1880 till 1886, when my buildings were burned and I had to leave as I had nothing left, my horses having been killed at the time of the

⁴² Homestead Application Declaration of Norbert Trottier, 8 June 1907, Saskatchewan Homestead Files No. 1406473, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

rebellion.”⁴³ The section of land that Norbert Trottier indicated he lived on in is the same section occupied since the 1850s by Charles Trottier, as indicated in his own homestead application.⁴⁴

Asserting Political Influence

Women in nineteenth century Métis communities had little direct political power and their role was to support the male leadership of the community. Most communities were known to have strong community matriarchs that, although they held no formal political influence, were respected for their age, experience, and reputation. There is evidence to suggest that these, and other Métis women, often found ways to assert their political influence and take advantage of political opportunities as they arose. For instance, women were often able to assert their political influence by refusing to work. In the labour-intensive buffalo hunt economy, men and women had complimentary socio-economic roles where women and children’s labour was highly valued and important to the economic sustenance of the family. Women generally processed buffalo meat, hides and robes, and made pemmican that were traded by their male relatives. Many may also have produced decorative material goods, such as hide coats and pad saddles that were used to bring additional income into the family.⁴⁵ Because of the complimentary nature of these socio-economic roles, there is evidence to suggest that some women were able to use their role to assert their social and political influence. For instance, Cecilia Boyer, wife of buffalo hunter Norbert Welsh, refused to prepare the meat and hide from a

⁴³ Homestead Application Declaration of Norbert Trottier, 8 June 1907, Saskatchewan Homestead Files No. 1406473, Saskatchewan Archives Board

⁴⁴ Homestead Application Declaration of Charles Trottier, 17 December 1903. Saskatchewan Homestead Files No. 847742. Saskatchewan Archives Board.

⁴⁵ Cheryl Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage: Métis Artistic Designs*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2001).

buffalo he had taken in sport rather than out of necessity.⁴⁶ By refusing to fulfill her economic role in the hunt, Boyer was asserting her own political will and understanding of traditional protocols related to killing animals. Interestingly, Cecilia Boyer, also appears to have led her own buffalo hunts, which was rare for Métis women.⁴⁷

Nineteenth century Métis women were also able to assert their political influence when counseling their husbands about forging alliances or by making verbal appeals to their community's leaders. Payment argues that during the 1885 resistance, women at Batoche not only supported the Métis effort by supplying food and provisions and caring for the sick and elderly, but also asserted their political will by speaking out to their husbands and to the community's leadership.⁴⁸ According to Payment, women did, in fact, openly express their views "especially if they were contrary to those of their fathers of husbands."⁴⁹ As evidence, Payment describes the actions of Josephte Lépine, who lobbied her husband Maxime, as well as other community leaders during the 1885 Resistance, in hopes that they would not resort to arms.⁵⁰ She also describes the actions of Marie-Anne Parenteau who spoke out to Father Fourmond at the neighboring parish of St. Laurent de Grandin to warn him of how she would defend herself, her family and community should soldiers arrive.⁵¹ By speaking out, Payment argues, women, such as these "became "active agents playing an important supply role outside the trenches, challeng[ing] Dumont and Riel's battle strategy."⁵²

⁴⁶ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 43.

⁴⁷ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 76-77.

⁴⁸ Payment, "La Vie en Rose?", 26-27.

⁴⁹ Payment, "La Vie en Rose?", 27.

⁵⁰ Payment, "La Vie en Rose?", 26.

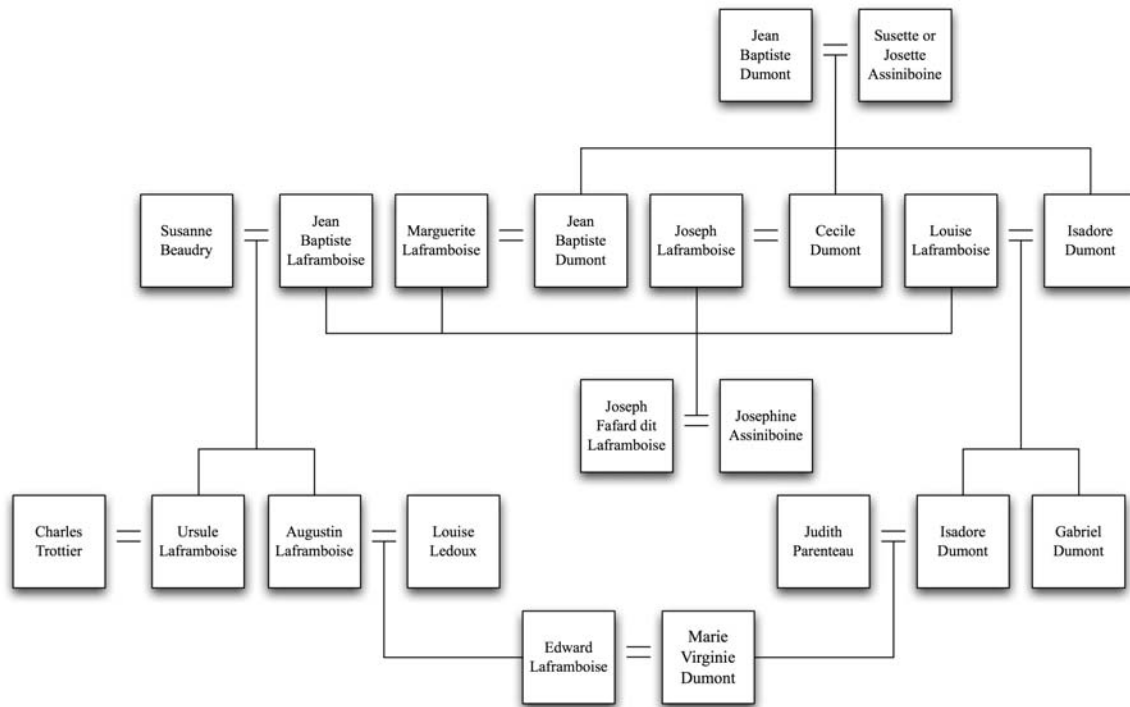
⁵¹ Payment, "La Vie en Rose?", 27.

⁵² Payment, "La Vie en Rose?", 26.

While there is little evidence to suggest that the women of Round Prairie were directly involved in the 1885 Resistance, there is evidence to suggest that the community's involvement can be attributed to kinship ties Round Prairie families shared with Métis at Batoche. For instance, Charles Trottier and approximately a dozen men from Round Prairie fought alongside Gabriel Dumont at the Battle of Fish Creek in April 1885.⁵³ From an examination of Trottier and Dumont's family genealogies we see that Dumont is closely related to the Round Prairie community through his mother Louise. (see Figure 4) This suggests that familial relationships factored into Trottier's and his men's participation in the Resistance. Gabriel Dumont's mother, Louise Laframboise, was aunt to Charles Trottier's wife, Ursule and her sister Angelique Trottier and Philomene Landry. These women were central in the female kinship network that made up the community of Round Prairie. Family connections between these two families were further strengthened by the marriages of Louise's siblings Marguerite and Joseph and by the marriage of her granddaughter Marie Virginie Dumont. Marguerite Laframboise was married to Jean Baptiste Dumont, brother to Isadore and uncle to Gabriel, while Louise's brother Joseph was married to Isadore's sister Cecile. Louise Laframboise and Isadore Dumont's granddaughter Marie Virginie was the daughter of Isadore Jr. and Judith Parenteau. Marie Virginie married Edward Laframboise, son of Augustin Laframboise and Louise Ledoux. Augustin Laframboise was the son of Jean Baptiste Laframboise, and therefore brother to Ursule, Philomene and Angelique and nephew of Louise Laframboise.

⁵³ George H. Young. "The Half-Breed and Indian Insurrection of 1885", Translations of certain Rebel Papers and Documents captured at Batoche, North West Territories, 12th May 1885, MG 301, Riel 623. Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Figure 4. Genealogical Connection Between Gabriel Dumont and Charles Trottier



The kinship relationship that Gabriel Dumont had with his mother's extended family at Round Prairie was also earlier relied upon in the early 1870s, when he sought help from Trottier because his own hunting party had contracted smallpox. According to Norbert Welsh, Dumont requested that his party of approximately twenty-seven families join Dumont's camp.⁵⁴ Trottier refused to let them join because they were sick, but allowed them to camp a short distance away and provided them with some food and supplies.⁵⁵ After Trottier and Dumont's camps had moved on, Trottier again sent Dumont a supply of alcohol that was intended to treat the disease.⁵⁶ This example, taken together with Dumont's reference to men from Round Prairie as "Trottier's men" when participating in the Battle of Fish Creek signifies the external recognition of Charles

⁵⁴ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter* 72-75.

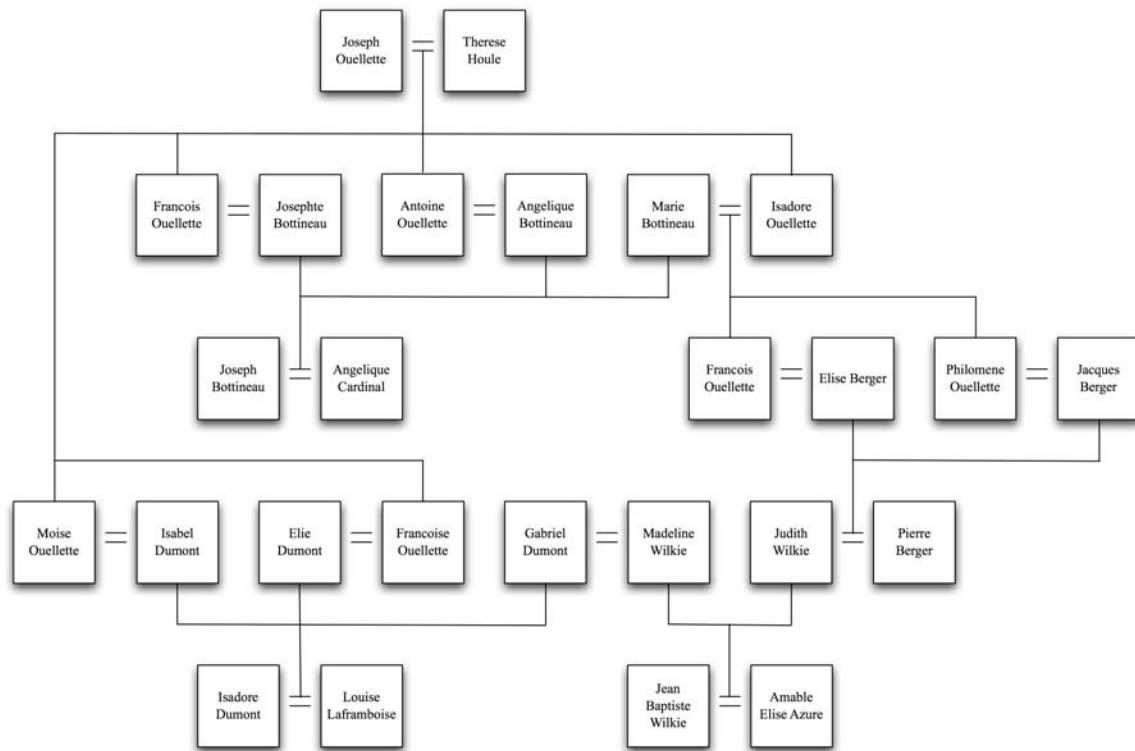
⁵⁵ Weekes, 72-75.

⁵⁶ Weekes, 72-75.

Trottier's leadership of the Round Prairie Métis community but also the importance of kinship ties that could be relied upon in time of need.

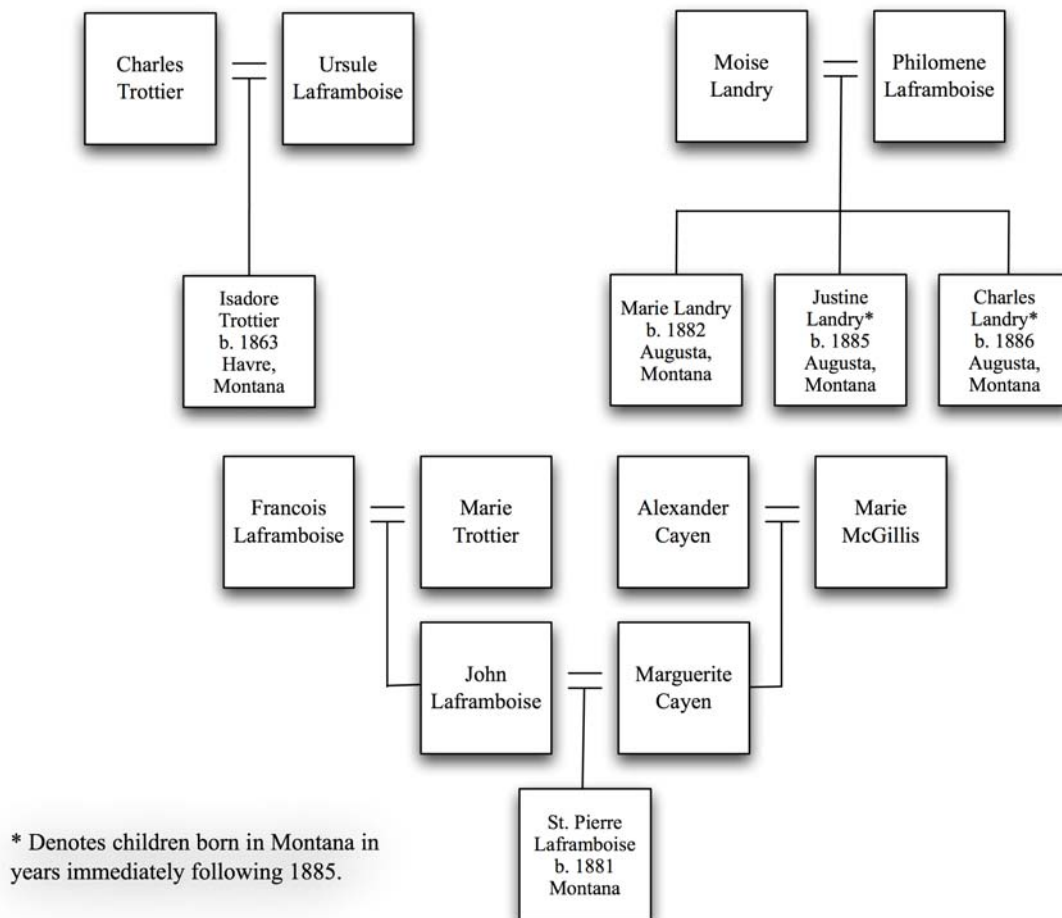
Kinship ties also proved to be important after 1885, when, in fear of government reprisal for their role in the Resistance, the community of Round Prairie abandoned their homes and followed other Métis, including Gabriel Dumont, to Montana. In Montana, they relied on the female kinship ties they had with Gabriel Dumont and his parents, Louise Laframboise and Isadore Dumont. Louise and Isadore's family was closely connected with the family of Joseph Ouellette and Therese Houle. (see Figure 5) Their daughter Isabel was married to Joseph and Therese's son Moise Ouellette and their son, Elie, was married to Joseph and Therese's daughter, Francoise. While Joseph and Therese did not reside in Montana, three of their children had married into a Montana Métis family. Their son Francois married Josephte Bottineau; their son, Antoine married Angelique Bottineau and their son Isadore married Marie Bottineau. Josephte, Angelique and Marie were the daughters of Joseph Bottineau and Angelique Cardinal. For the Round Prairie Métis families, their connection to Montana Métis families was strengthened through their relationship to Gabriel Dumont and his wife, Madeline Wilkie. Madeline was the daughter of Amable Elise Azure and Jean Baptiste Wilkie, who lived in the Lewistown, Montana area. This family network gets more complex as Madeline's sister, Judith had two children who married into the family of Isadore Ouellette and Marie Bottineau. Judith Wilkie and Pierre Berger's daughter Elise married Francois Ouellette, while their son Jacques, married Philomene Ouellette.

Figure 5. Dumont, Ouellette, and Wilkie Genealogies



From an analysis of birth records, it appears that Ursule, Philomene and John Laframboise, together with their respective spouses and families, had also spent time in Montana in the early 1880s, prior to the large scale movement of the community in 1885. (see Figure 6) Records indicate that Ursule and Charles Trottier had spent some time in Montana prior to 1885, as they had a son, Isadore, born in Havre, Montana in 1863. As well, Philomene and her husband, Moise Landry had at least one daughter born in the United States before 1885. A daughter Marie was born in Augusta, Montana in 1882. They also had another daughter Justine, born in Augusta in 1885 and a son, Charles, born there in 1886. John Laframboise was the son of Francois Laframboise and Marie Trottier. Laframboise and his wife Marguerite Cayen, daughter of Alexander Cayen and Marie McGillis, also had a son, St. Pierre Laframboise born in Montana in 1881 that indicates that they too, spent time in Montana prior to 1885.

Figure 6. Children Born in Montana Prior to 1885

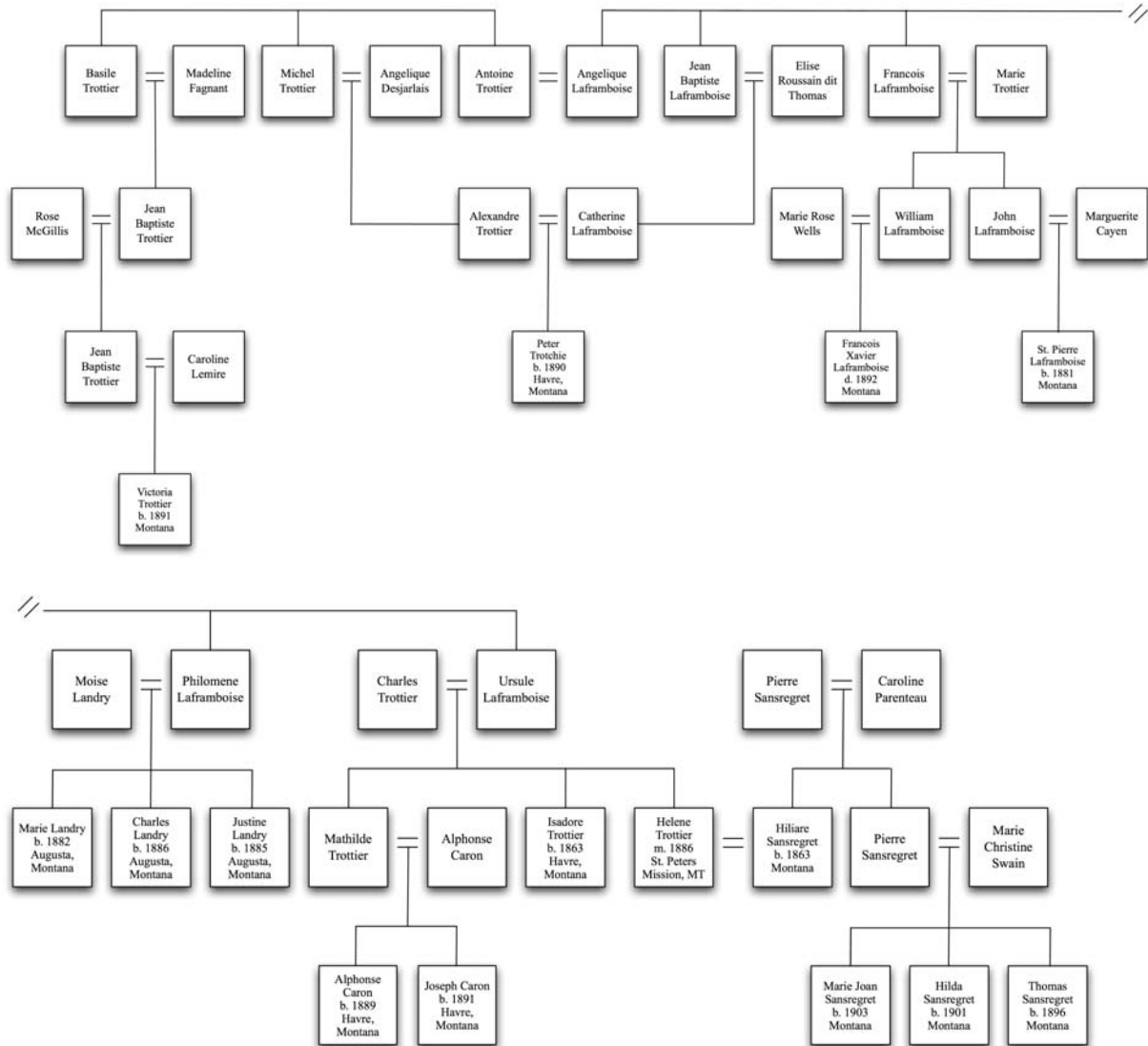


The Trottier and Laframboise families remained in Montana until 1903-04 when they returned to Round Prairie.⁵⁷ They were most likely eager to return to their homeland along the South Saskatchewan River because they had left many relatives in Métis communities across Saskatchewan including Batoche, Willow Bunch, Maple Creek, and the Cypress Hills. Returning were the families of Ursule Laframboise and Charles Trottier, Philomene Laframboise and Moise Landry, Angelique Laframboise and Antoine Trottier as well as the families of Andre Trottier and Isabel Falcon. (see Figure 7) Both

⁵⁷ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 104-105.

Antoine and Andre had died by 1903, and so did not return to Round Prairie, but their wives and many of their children and grandchildren did return with the large extended family. By this time the growing extended family of Trottiers and Laframboises included the surnames of Sansregret, Caron and others that had married into the family, prior to the move to Montana and after. For instance, Pierre Sansregret and his wife Caroline Parenteau had been part of the Round Prairie community since the 1860s-70s. While it is unclear at how they are related to the community at that time, evidence suggests that they and their children did in fact, travel to Montana with the Round Prairie community. Their son Pierre and his wife Marie Christine Swain had at least three children born in Montana after 1885. Thomas in 1896, Hilda in 1901 and Marie Joan in 1903. Their son, Hiliare, an adult by 1885, was also in Montana. He joined the Trottier and Laframboise families while in Montana when he married Helene Trottier, daughter of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise in 1886. It is also possible, that Alphonse Caron, son of Pierre Caron and Petronilla Martin, was a member of the Round Prairie community by the 1880s and fled with the community to Montana. He did however, return with the community in 1903, as he had, by this time married into the community. Alphonse Caron was married to Mathilde Trottier, daughter of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise.

Figure 7. Children Born in Montana After 1885



By the early 1900s, Montana Métis families, such as the Ouellettes, Belcourts and the extended family of John Wells, were also part of the large extended Laframboise family that was leaving Montana to return to reestablish themselves at Round Prairie.⁵⁸ (see Figure 8) William Belcourt married Marie Trottier, daughter of Antoine Trottier and Angelique Laframboise in 1888 in St. Peter's Mission, Montana. They then returned with her family to Round Prairie in 1903. John Wells' son Fred recounts in Rita Schilling's

⁵⁸ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 104-105.

Gabriel's Children that he was one of about fourteen of his siblings that traveled to Round Prairie in 1903-04. He recalled that his father John, his uncle and some cousins, as well as his maternal grandparents made the trip. Born in Lewistown, Montana, Wells does not provide the name of his mother but indicates that she was born in Saskatchewan, near Willow Bunch. His father, John was born in the United States.⁵⁹ He does not name his uncle or his cousins, but does refer to his maternal grandmother as "Grandma Ouellette." Family genealogies indicate that Fred is the son of John Wells and Celina Ouellette and that "Grandma Ouellette" is in fact, Angelique Bottineau, wife of Antoine Ouellette. Fred Wells recalled his family's trip from Montana.

After the railway was put down in about 1903 there was no more work for my dad in Lewistown and all them places and that's why we left. My ma's dad he was coaxing my dad to come around to this country here. He wanted to get to Estevan and Weyburn because he thought there was a township there that the government was reserving. He believed it would be kept open for the Métis people and there would be no homesteaders allowed or anything like that, you know. There was some kind of talk about it but that never happened.

When we left Montana for Canada, it was quite a thing. Dad had two wagons and 8 horses hooked up with a jerk line. The next one was a covered wagon, with four horses on that one that my uncle drove. Next was Dad with his Red River cart that he had used for freighting, where he had his bed. Next was two horses hooked on a buggy. It was what they called a democrat and it had two seats on it. There was a top buggy with one horse hooked up to it, that was where Grandma Ouellette was riding.⁶⁰

When they arrived, John Wells built a house at Round Prairie, which he abandoned in 1916 and returned to Montana.⁶¹ His son Fred also initially returned to Montana, but returned to Round Prairie the following year to rejoin his wife, Rosie Trottier, daughter of Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier. Catherine Laframboise was the daughter of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Elise Roussain dit Thomas, and niece to Ursule,

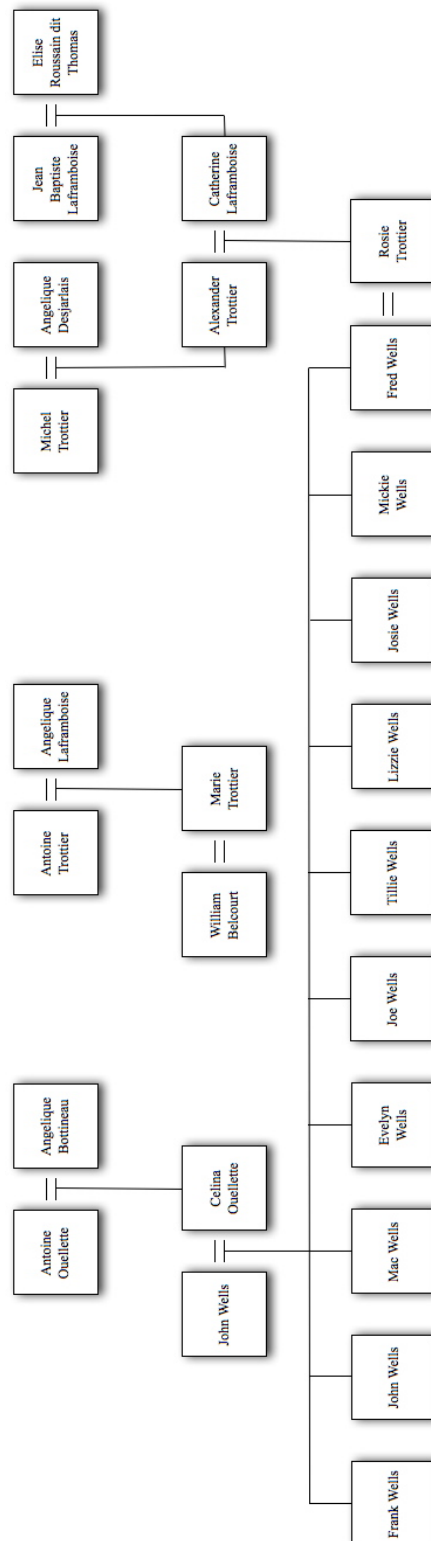
⁵⁹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 113.

⁶⁰ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 114.

⁶¹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 113.

Philomene, Angelique and Francois. Alexander Trottier was the son of Michel Trottier and Angelique Desjarlais. Michel Trottier was the brother of Charles, Andre, Antoine and Marie. Michel Trottier, and his brother Basile, previously mentioned did not live in the Round Prairie community, but obviously some of their children lived in the community, and intermarried into the Laframboise family.

Figure 8. Ouellette, Wells and Belcourt Intermarriage with Laframboise Families



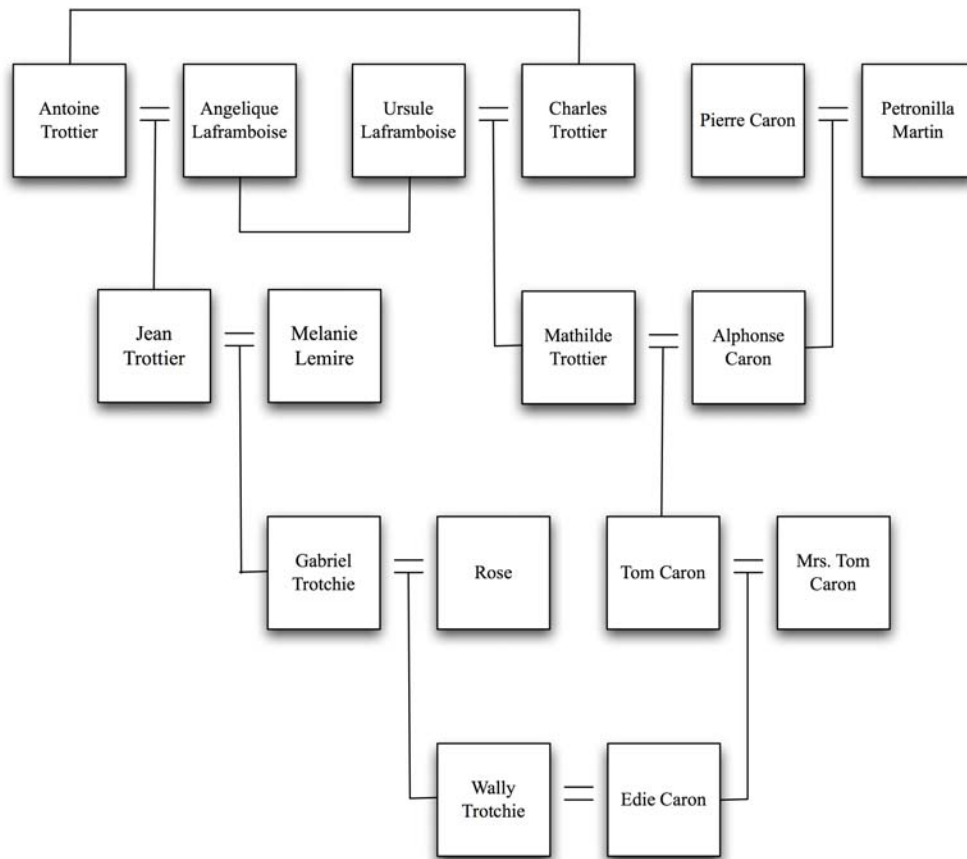
The enduring nature of women's kinship as central to Métis economic, social and political structures remained consistent when the Round Prairie Métis returned from Montana in 1903. When they returned, many attempted to farm the land they had once hunted on. Many applied for land or money scrip that they had never received or applied for homestead on the land they had previously settled. Unfortunately, agriculture for these families proved difficult as the land was of poor quality. The soil was sandy and rocky and the land was covered in parts by both forest and muskeg. As a result many were forced to seek out employment elsewhere. According to the community's contemporary Elders, Kay Mazer, Ken Caron and Edie Trotchie, men often found seasonal work in menial, labour intensive jobs such as picking rocks for farmers, clearing land, cutting and hauling cord wood and fence posts, or working at the nearby Dundurn military camp.⁶² Women in the community continued to support the family economy by raising chickens, gardening and continuing to harvest wild foods. Some elderly women in the community also continued to hold respected positions of community matriarchs. While having no formal political authority, these women were respected for their age, knowledge and reputation. As a result, they were able to have some influence in the community. For instance, Edie Trotchie, recalled that her great grandmother, Mathilde Trottier was not only one of the community's midwives, but also one of the community's well-respected matriarchs in the late 1800s-early 1900s.⁶³ (see Figure 9) When the community returned from Montana, it was Mathilde that was instrumental in ensuring

⁶² Kay Mazer, interview by Cheryl Troupe, 19 January 2004, Saskatoon, SK.; Ken Caron, interview by Cheryl Troupe, 19 January 2004, Saskatoon, SK.; and Edie Trotchie, interview by Cheryl Troupe, 18 February 2004, Saskatoon, SK.

⁶³ Edie Trotchie, 18 February 2004.

that religious services were observed.⁶⁴ With no church or chapel available upon return from Montana, Mathilde insisted that religious services be held in her own home and that when the priest visited, that all the community's newborn children be baptized.⁶⁵

Figure 9. Edie Trotchie Genealogy



Soon after the return from Montana, Round Prairie families began to petition the provincial government that a school district be organized and a school built.⁶⁶ Evidence suggests, however, that the size and shape of the school district as well as the school building were found to dissatisfactory to the Round Prairie families from the start.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁴ Edie Trotchie, 18 February 2004.

⁶⁵ Edie Trotchie, 18 February 2004.

⁶⁶ Petition for the Formation of a Public School District, 20 March 1905, Round Prairie School District File 1624, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

⁶⁷ Letter to Deputy Commissioner of Education, Regina from Leonard McQuay, 4 August 1909, Round Prairie School District File 1624, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

school district was long and narrow in shape, which meant that some children had to walk in excess of six or seven miles to school. This distance was made more difficult for students as the route to school were, in places, covered in muskeg and forests.

Community dissatisfaction in the school district and school was compounded by the inadequacy of the school building. It was found to not have the basic supplies necessary. There were no blackboard, no window coverings, no chair for the teacher and the walls were not plastered. Perhaps most discouraging for parents, students and teacher, was the hiring of an English-speaking teacher. Because the teacher spoke no French, it was nearly impossible for him to teach in a community that was predominately French speaking, with students spoke very little English.⁶⁸ In response to their dissatisfaction, community members petitioned for changes to the boundaries of the school district and school improvements.⁶⁹ There is, however, no evidence to suggest that improvements to the school were ever made, and as a result, by 1913, many Round Prairie Métis quit sending their children to school.⁷⁰ Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that the tax mill rates, which are determined by property value, were significantly higher rate at Round Prairie than for the Rural Municipality of Dundurn, despite the poor quality farmland and the inadequate school facilities.⁷¹ For instance, the mill rate at Round Prairie from 1925 to 1927 was twenty, while the mill rate for Dundurn fluctuated between 10 and 12. In 1928, the mill rate at Round Prairie jumped to 25 where it remained until 1932. At Dundurn, the mill rate for the same period remained at 12 until 1931 when it dropped to 10, and in

⁶⁸ Letter to Deputy Commissioner of Education, Regina from Leonard McQuay, 4 August 1909, Round Prairie School District File 1624, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

⁶⁹ Petition for Change in School District, 14 November 1910, Round Prairie School District File 1624, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

⁷⁰ Letter from John Mawson, School Trustee, 14 April 1913, Round Prairie School District File 1624, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

⁷¹ Dundurn Rural Municipality 314. Annual Financial Returns, MA41. Saskatchewan Archives Board.

1932 to 7. In 1933, the mill rate at Round Prairie dropped to ten, but was still double what Dundurn residents were paying with a mill rate of 5. By the late 1930s, the mill rates for Round Prairie and Dundurn began to align with one another, but by this time, most of the Métis families had moved away. The impact of these excessive taxation rates on Round Prairie Métis was most likely immense. So much so, that Ken Caron recalled that when his family moved from Round Prairie in the early 1950s, the money from the sale of their house and land went towards paying back taxes.⁷² These excessive tax rates, made worse by poor quality farmland, the inability to make the required land improvements as specified under the Homestead Act and lack of employment opportunity influenced many Round Prairie families' decisions to move from their community. What followed was a slow out-migration of Métis families, so that by the 1930s, most had abandoned their traditional homeland and relocated to the city of Saskatoon.

Conclusion

The community of Round Prairie has its history firmly rooted in the buffalo hunt economy of the nineteenth century. It is evident that female kinship is the enduring organizational concept maintained by this community despite economic changes, community movement, physical relocation and political upheaval. From its early days as a nineteenth century buffalo hunt brigade, to early twentieth century homesteading settlement, and to the out-migration of Métis families during the 1920s and 30s, the families that settled at Round Prairie continued to organize themselves along female kinship lines and trace their female kinship to the initial core group of Laframboise women.

⁷² Ken Caron, 19 January 2004.

CHAPTER FOUR

“BUT WE WERE ONE COMMUNITY”: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN IN THE 1930S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SASKATOON MÉTIS COMMUNITY

Life in the city brought significant change for Round Prairie Métis families. To make themselves at home in their new surroundings and perhaps to ease the transition to the urban environment, these families drew upon recognizable expressions of traditions that centered on concepts of family and the significance of women's kinship in determining the bounds, and organization, of their community. These families continued to organize themselves along kinship lines in ways that were consistent with past cultural practices ensuring that the necessary social, economic and political roles were filled and providing for the transmission of traditions, values and worldview. The move to the city brought significant change to the social and economic roles played by women, yet traditions of extended family and the significance of female kinship remained consistent. And, while politically organizing in the 1930s and again in the 1960s, these families continued to draw on models of governance that were based on nineteenth century social and economic structures. As a result, nineteenth century traditions of family and women's kinship continue to be the enduring organizational concept maintained by this community and are expressed in post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism.

Changing Economic and Social Roles in the City

City life brought more opportunity for employment, but few changes to the actual economic lifestyle of the Round Prairie Métis. When work was available, men continued to be employed seasonally, picking rocks and clearing land during the summer, working

for farmers and hauling wood during the winter. When work was not available, many with few options, took work on government sponsored relief projects such as the construction of the Grand Trunk Bridge (the CN Railway Bridge) in Saskatoon, where they were again day workers in menial, labour intensive positions.¹ According to Nora Cummings,

It was the dirty thirties. You hear all these Métis talk about the dirty thirties. They had a pretty rough time. My uncles worked on that Broadway Bridge. A lot of them, the Métis had to work for their welfare. They didn't know what welfare was. A lot of them had to go on welfare, or go on rations.²

If forced to receive government-sponsored relief, evidence suggests that Métis families faced significant discrimination and racism. It appears that relief officers were quite eager to disqualify recipients, often basing decisions upon their own prejudices. Evidence suggest that relief officers often believed Métis recipients could not be trusted, that they abused their financial aid or did not truly require assistance. These prejudices and attitudes are demonstrated numerous times in the city relief files, most strikingly in the cases of Alex Trotchie and Madeline Laframboise. In a reapplication for assistance made by Alex Trotchie, relief officers make reference to Trotchie as “a worthless half breed” and, while his reapplication is approved, the relief officers note that Trotchie has made false declarations in the past is to be “closely watched.”³ In Madeline Laframboise's case, she, and her five children, had been in receipt of relief for approximately ten years.⁴ During this time, relief officers questioned her as to the whereabouts of her husband. In response, she claimed that he had “run off” and could not be found. The relief officer

¹ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

² Nora Cummings, interview by Cheryl Troupe, 14 January 2008, Saskatoon, SK.

³ Letter to Mr. A. Leslie, A/City Commissioner, 29 January 1949. Relief Investigations, Relief Complaints-Relief Families, Relief Records, City of Saskatoon Archives.

⁴ Letter to Mr. A. Leslie, A/City Commissioner, 26 November 1942. Relief Investigations, Relief Complaints-Relief Families, Relief Records, City of Saskatoon Archives.

noted in a letter that he did not believe Laframboise, and questioned whether or not she even knew who was the father or fathers of her children. Further, the relief officer believed her not to be in need of assistance, but that it was difficult to prove. She is eventually disqualified because the relief officer believes her to be lying about two separate incidents. First, she is repeatedly seen in the company of a soldier whom she states to the relief officer is her brother. While not explicit in the correspondence, the relief officers perhaps question the identity of her male companion because they believe him to be the father of her children and financially providing for them. If this were true, she and her children would not be in need of relief and would be disqualified. Second, she is caught wearing a fur coat, which presumably would be beyond her financial means if she were, in fact, in need of financial aid. When questioned about both of these incidents, she is believed to be lying and is cut off financial aid. The relief officer then reports her possession of the fur coat to the police, believing Laframboise to be “a member of a shoplifting gang” and that she “be kept under observation.”

While a number of Métis families did seek financial aid, some women, in an effort to provide for their families, became employed outside the home. Women found work as waitresses, as domestic help for more affluent families, and, during the war years, in factories supporting the war effort. Nora Cummings remembers her mother Irene Dimick working outside the home. Nora recalled,

my mother worked at Modern Press which was downtown so the street cars would come to Lorne Avenue, where the Exhibition grounds are, that's where they would make the turn. She would walk there to catch her streetcar to go downtown and work and then come home at night. She worked there for quite awhile...and my mother did housework, a lot of house work in this city. My mom worked for 10 cents a day and she paid 5 cents for us to be looked after. And in that time she

got us insurance. How she did that, I'll never know, but my mom was a hard working lady.⁵

Women continued to contribute to the family economy by growing and gathering the majority of the family's food. In the city, families continued to rely on garden produce planted and tended by the women in the community, much like they had at Round Prairie.⁶ In the 1930s and 40s, Nora identified that the women in the community planted a large communal garden.⁷ These community gardens not only provided a means to support the family economy but also provided an opportunity for social interaction and a way to maintain bonds of community. According to Nora, the community gardens were located where the present day Aden Bowman Collegiate now stands on Taylor Avenue and Clarence Avenue.⁸

When possible, many families continued to supplement their income by continuing to live off the land. Many women continued to gather wild foods when available and men continued to hunt on the outskirts of the city. Ken Caron, recalls that, as late as the 1950s, families would gather and go berry picking outside the city, camping for days at a time, and that their family often received wild foods that had been hunted by extended family members.⁹ It is unknown if the reasons for this were strictly economic or a way to maintain cultural practices in an urban environment, or a combination of the two. But what is known is that these Métis families adapted to their new environment by seeking ways to integrate themselves into the new economic order while maintaining cultural traditions that were significant to them.

⁵ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁶ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁸ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁹ Ken Caron, 19 January 2004.

City life also brought change to the social roles women played in the community. For instance, the community's reliance on Métis women's roles as midwives and healers began to decrease as the community adapted to urban life. According to Schilling, Catherine Laframboise was recognized as one of the community's matriarchs and was respected for her knowledge of traditional medicines.¹⁰ Kay Mazer suggested that, over time, fewer and fewer individuals relied on the services of midwives and those with traditional knowledge of plants and medicines, relying more on practitioners of western medicine.¹¹ According to Kay, however, this trend was already evident in the early 1900s when the community began to use the services of a medical doctor in Saskatoon, as well as traditional practitioners in their community.¹² Despite this decline, women healers continued to be held in high regard and esteemed for their gifts and because they had delivered many of the community's children.¹³

While women's influence in the community's medical practices may have decreased, women, such as Catherine Laframboise continued, because of their knowledge and reputation, to be recognized as the community's matriarchs. These matriarch's played an important role ensuring that traditional celebrations continued as well as in providing a traditional education and instilling cultural values to the family. According to Nora Cummings, times were hard but they were thankful that they had their grandmother, Justine Trottier, one of the community's matriarchs who served to hold the family together in the city.¹⁴ It was because of Justine Trottier that the family continued to participate in traditional Métis celebrations and holidays as they had prior to moving to

¹⁰ Rita Schilling, *So Many to be Remembered: By So Few*, N.P. 1978, 31.

¹¹ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

¹² Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

¹³ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

¹⁴ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

the city. In particular, the families maintained the elaborate social gathering that took place on New Years day when families would go from house to house to share a meal and visit relatives in the community.¹⁵ These types of gatherings created opportunities for social interaction, served to strengthen and maintain kinship ties, and to reinforce Métis cultural traditions.

In their everyday lives, Métis families in the city were often faced with discrimination and racism. Kay Mazer identified that when attending school, she and other Métis children were often referred to as “dirty half breeds” both by teachers and other students.¹⁶ She also recalled that some women consciously stopped referring to themselves as Métis when in the company of non-Aboriginal people.¹⁷ For instance, she noted that Mary Camponi and her family did not identify as Métis, rather they chose to identify as Italian, based on her husband’s Italian heritage and last name. The same was true for Mary’s sister, Mrs. Birmingham, who chose for her and her children to identify as Scottish based on her married surname. Ken Caron also recalled that when he attended school his mother, Flora Caron, told him to tell others that he was a Jehovah’s Witness rather than Catholic, because she believed that if others were to know that they were Catholic it would be assumed, because of their darker skin colour, that they were Métis.¹⁸ This suggests that women, such as Mary Camponi, Mrs. Birmingham and Flora Caron, were aware of the prejudices of others and were creative in ways to protect themselves and their children from social exclusion.

¹⁵ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁶ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

¹⁷ Kay Mazer interview by Cheryl Troupe, 27 April 2006, Saskatoon, SK.

¹⁸ Ken Caron, 19 January 2004.

According to Kay Mazer, women in the community also made a conscious effort to find ways to maintain family ties and were largely responsible for organizing social events and cultural celebrations. For instance, according to Kay Mazer, dances were planned and held regularly in the community, often once a month and together with frequent visiting, served to keep the bonds of community strong.¹⁹ Beginning in the 1930s however, it appears that community gatherings took on an additional purpose, becoming not just social events, but also venues for political discussion and community organizing.²⁰ It is through these social events that the community's women were able to bring community members together, create opportunity for political discussion and perhaps influence Métis political organization. That women's political roles were beginning to evolve was perhaps a response to their changing social and economic role in the city, the discrimination and social exclusion they faced as they struggled to protect and provide for their families.

Traditional Métis Community Structures in an Urban Environment

From a survey of 1915 to 1950 City of Saskatoon Henderson Directories, and to a lesser extend 1930-45 City of Saskatoon Voter's Lists, it appears that by the late 1910s there were already numerous Round Prairie Métis families living in the city. (see Table 1 and 2) Living on both sides of the South Saskatchewan River, these families settled as early as 1913, in the King George and Holiday Park areas on the west side of the city and by the 1930s, in Nutana on the east side. (See Figure 11 and 12) Oral history suggests that when settling on the west side of city, families often moved into available housing , while on the east side, many lived in tents until they could either rent or build themselves

¹⁹ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006,

²⁰ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

a house.²¹ That individuals, such as C. Trotchie and Isador Trottier, are identified in the archival records as living simply on Dufferin Avenue, with no specific address suggests that perhaps they were in fact living in tents on the east side.²² That some may have lived in tents, at least initially, is also supported by the fact that these areas were in various stages of development between 1915 and 1945. According to a City of Saskatoon Housing Report, by 1915 the King George area was considered within the “built up” area of the city because it occupied by people, houses, businesses and roads while the Holiday Park area was located at within the fringe of city development.²³ On the east side, the survey identified that in 1915, the Nutana area north of 8th Street fell within the developed area, and the area south of 8th Street within the fringe area.²⁴ By 1945, development had spread so that the built up area reached north of Taylor, with much of Dufferin Avenue still located outside the city’s developed areas. As a result, it was entirely possible that families living on the outskirts could have quite easily been living in tents.

That many were not living within the built up areas of the city, but at the outskirts of city development does not preclude them from being urbanized people. These families still lived within the city limits, were identified within the city directories, were listed on city voting registries and many were employed in the city. In fact, it can perhaps be argued that their physical position at the margins of the city was largely economic and cultural. This was an area that was largely undeveloped by the city, with little to no

²¹ Ron J. Camponi, 19 March 1984.; Nora Cummings, 28 February 2004.; Irene Dimick, 17 February 1984.; and, Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

²² Saskatoon Henderson Directory 1938, Page 483. City of Saskatoon Archives; Saskatoon Henderson Directory 1939, Page 494. City of Saskatoon Archives; Saskatoon Henderson Directory 1938, Page 493. City of Saskatoon Archives.

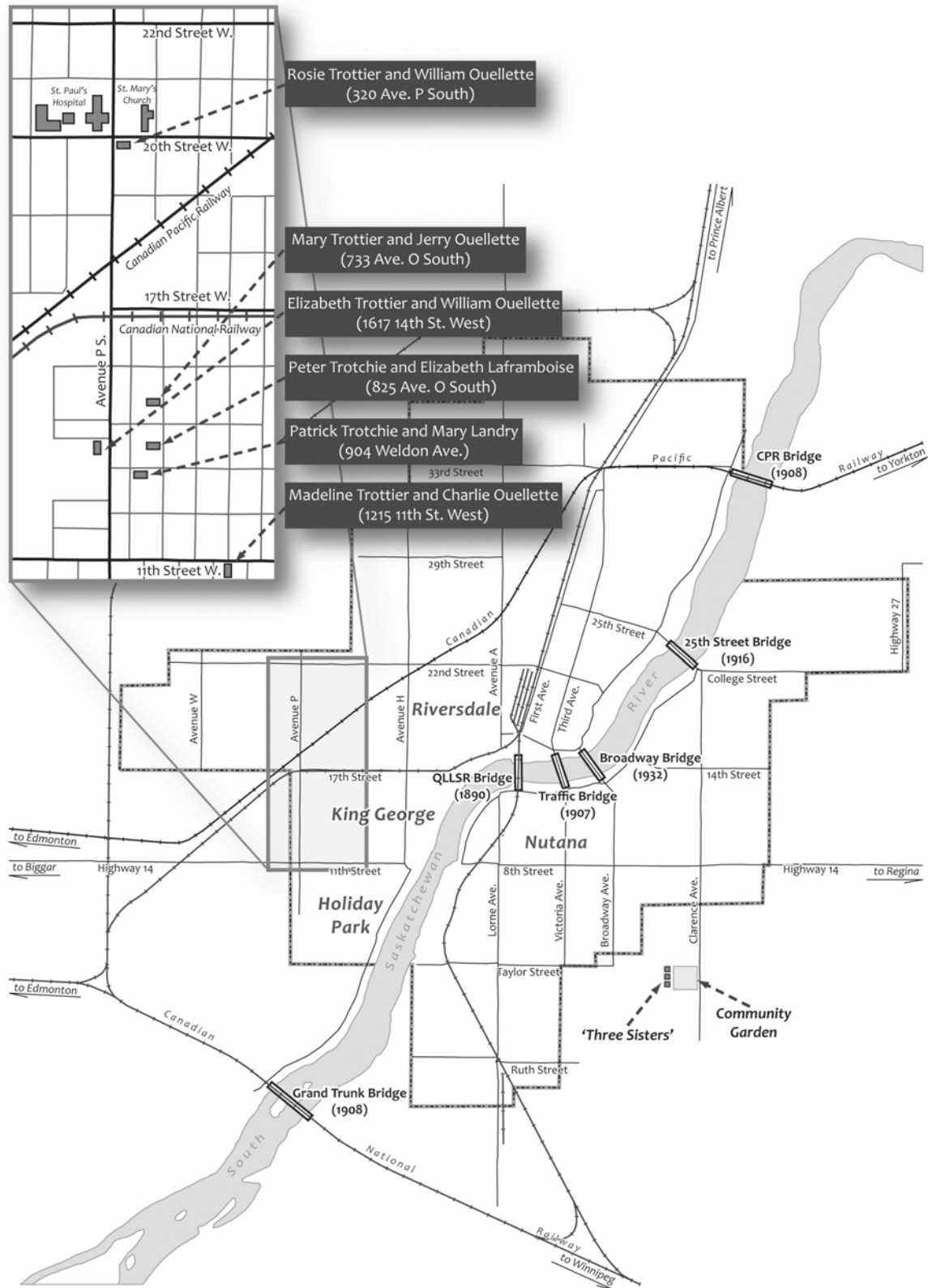
²³ City of Saskatoon, *Housing Report, 1961*. Planning and Building Department, City of Saskatoon Archives.

²⁴ City of Saskatoon, *Housing Report, 1961*.

settlement. This allowed Métis families, who were predominately poor and were only sporadically employed, to move into the area, living in tents until they could build or rent other housing. Living on the outskirts allowed these families to maintain some independence from the city and in some ways, maintain a traditional lifestyle. For instance, it has been identified that in the early years in the city, their location on the outskirts allowed families to continue to hunt and gather traditional foods.²⁵ Most importantly, because there was little or even no settlement in the areas where these families chose to live, they could settle in close proximity to one another, maintaining familial connections in a growing urban environment.

²⁵ Ken Caron, 19 January 2004.

Figure 10. Map of Saskatoon c. 1930



**Table 1. Métis Families Residing in West Side Neighbourhoods, Saskatoon
1913-1940**

Year	Name	Address
1913/14	Trottier, Joseph E.	411 27 th Street West
1914	Trottier, Louis P	411 27 th Street West
1914	Trottier, Napoleon	411 27 th Street West
1915	Wells, Fred	621 Avenue G South
1920	Ouellette, Lena	126 Avenue M South
1920	Ouillet, Charles	518 Avenue F South
1920	Ouillet, William	610 Avenue L South
1920	Wells, John Wells, Mack Wells, Stella	126 Avenue M South
1920	Wells, John Junior	134 Avenue M South
1921/22	Trottier, Catherine	609 Avenue I South
1925	Oulette, Charles	825 Avenue O South
1925	Wells, John	740 Weldon Avenue
1930	Wells, Fred	825 Avenue O South
1933	Trottier, John	910 Weldon Avenue
1933/34 1936	Trottier, Catherine Trottier, Patrick	904 Weldon Avenue
1933	Trottier, Pete	825 Avenue H South
1934	Fayant, Alexander	406 Avenue T South
1934	Fayant, Frederick	309 Avenue F South
1934	Fayant, Mrs. Jerome	317 Avenue T South
1934	Laframboise, Mrs. J.H.	2021 14 th Street West
1934	Oullette, Joseph	718 Weldon Avenue
1934	Oullette, Mrs. Ouellette, Mary Ouellette, Frederick	733 Avenue O South
1934	Oullette, William	1617 14 th Street West
1934	Trotchie, Patrick	904 Weldon Avenue
1934	Trotchie, Peter	825 Avenue O South
1934	Trochie, John	825 Avenue O South
1934	Wells, Frederick	320 Avenue P South
1934	Wells, Mrs. John	2005 22 nd Street West
1935	Landrie, Gabriel	910 Weldon Avenue
1936	Landry, Isadore	1707 13 th Street West
1936	Oulette, Charlie Oulette, Madeline	1215 11 th Street West
1936	Oulette, John J.	718 Weldon Avenue
1936	Trochie, Mrs. C.	1401 11 th Street West
1937	Trotchie, Bertha Trotchie, Frank	910 Weldon Avenue
1937	Trotchie, Gabe	830 Avenue O South
1937	Trotchie, Norman	220 Avenue D South
1938	Trotchie, Frank	1028 Avenue N South
1938	Trotchie, Patrick	1150 Avenue L South
1938	Trotchie, Wm. Trotchie, Bertha	1028 Avenue N South
1938	Trotchie, Catherine	813 Avenue I South
1938	Trotchie, Frank	816 Avenue M South

1939/40	Trotchie, Gabe	816 Avenue M South
1940	Trotchie, Frank	1028 Avenue N South
1940	Trotchie, John	1013 Avenue M South

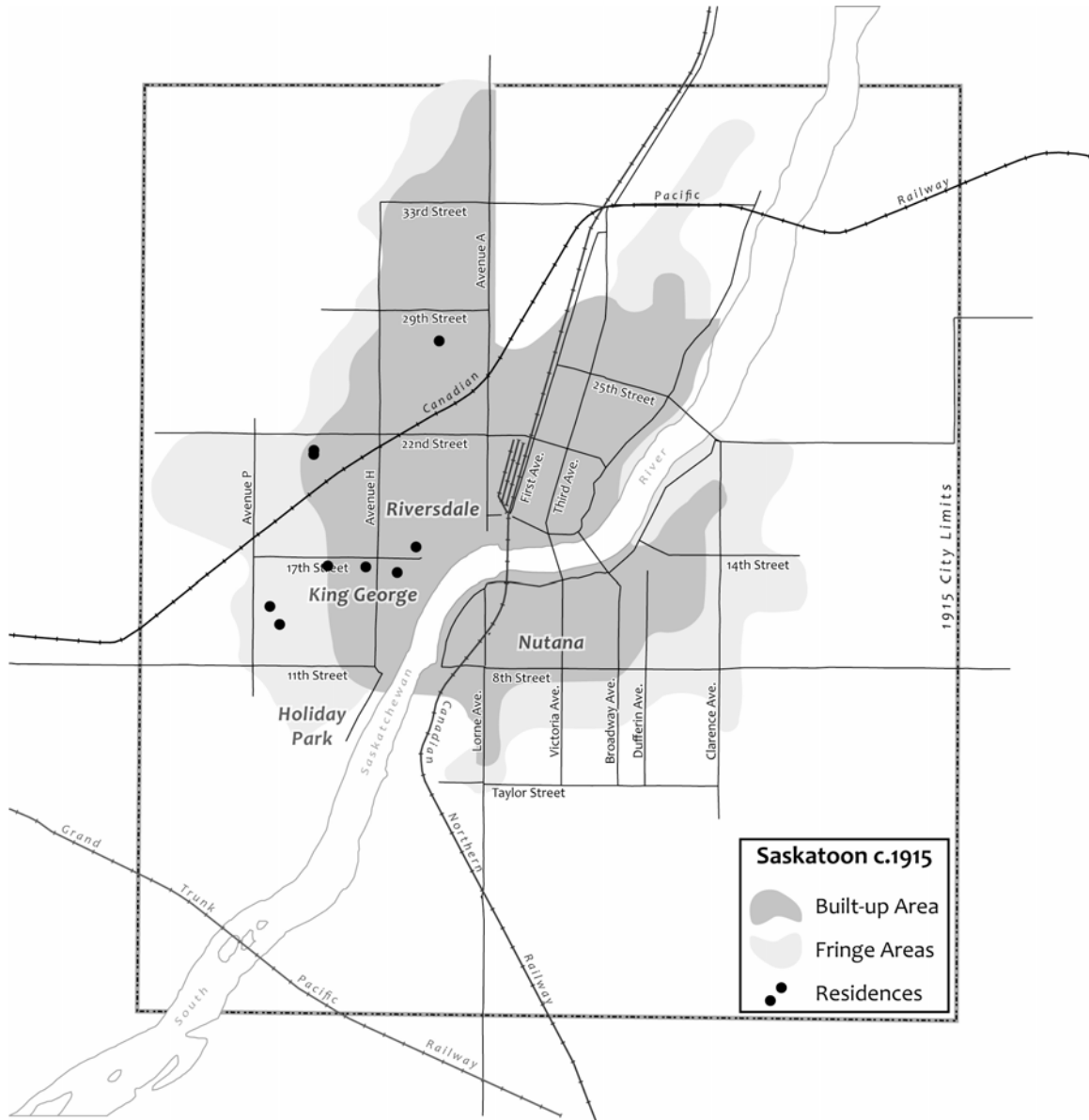
Source: Saskatoon Henderson Directories, 1913 to 1940. City of Saskatoon Archives; City of Saskatoon Voter's List 1936, City of Saskatoon Archives. Names have been included to demonstrate residency patterns of Round Prairie families. It is not an exhaustive list of all names identified as being part of the Round Prairie community. Spelling errors as they appear in the directories have been included in this table.

Table 2. Métis Families Residing in East Side Neighbourhoods, Saskatoon 1930-1949

Year	Name	Address
1930	Oullette, J.	225 1 st Street
1930	Wm. Vandale	437 Taylor Street
1932	Trottier, Alexander Trottier, Mrs. Justine Trottier, Norman	704 4 th Street
1933	Trottier, Mrs. Justine	802 4 th Street
1934	Trotchie, Alexander	508 3 rd Street
1936/37	Landry, Marguerite	2301 Lorne Avenue
1936	Trotchie, Alexander Trotchie, Mrs. J. Trotchie, Mrs. I.	930 6 th Street
1936	Vandale, Wm.	437 Taylor Street
1938/41	Landry, Charles Landry, Clement Landry, Edward Landry, Eva	1910 York Avenue
1938	Trotchie, C.	Dufferin
1938	Trotchie, Isador	Dufferin
1938	Trotchie, Mrs. J. Trotchie, Mrs. J.	1510 Broadway
1939	Trotchie, Irene	1107 5 th Street
1939/40	Trotchie, Isador	Dufferin
1941/42	Trotchie, Mrs. J.	2135 Landsdowne Avenue
1942	Trotchie, Isador	701 Taylor Street
1942/43	Landrie, Charles Landrie, Clem Landrie, Edward Landrie, Eva	1910 York Avenue
1944/45	Trotchie, Norman	901 5 th Street
1946/48	Landrie, Charles Landrie, Eva Landrie, Edward	1910 York Avenue
1946/49	Landrie, Clem	820 4 th Street East
1949	Landrie, Charles	731 Taylor Street

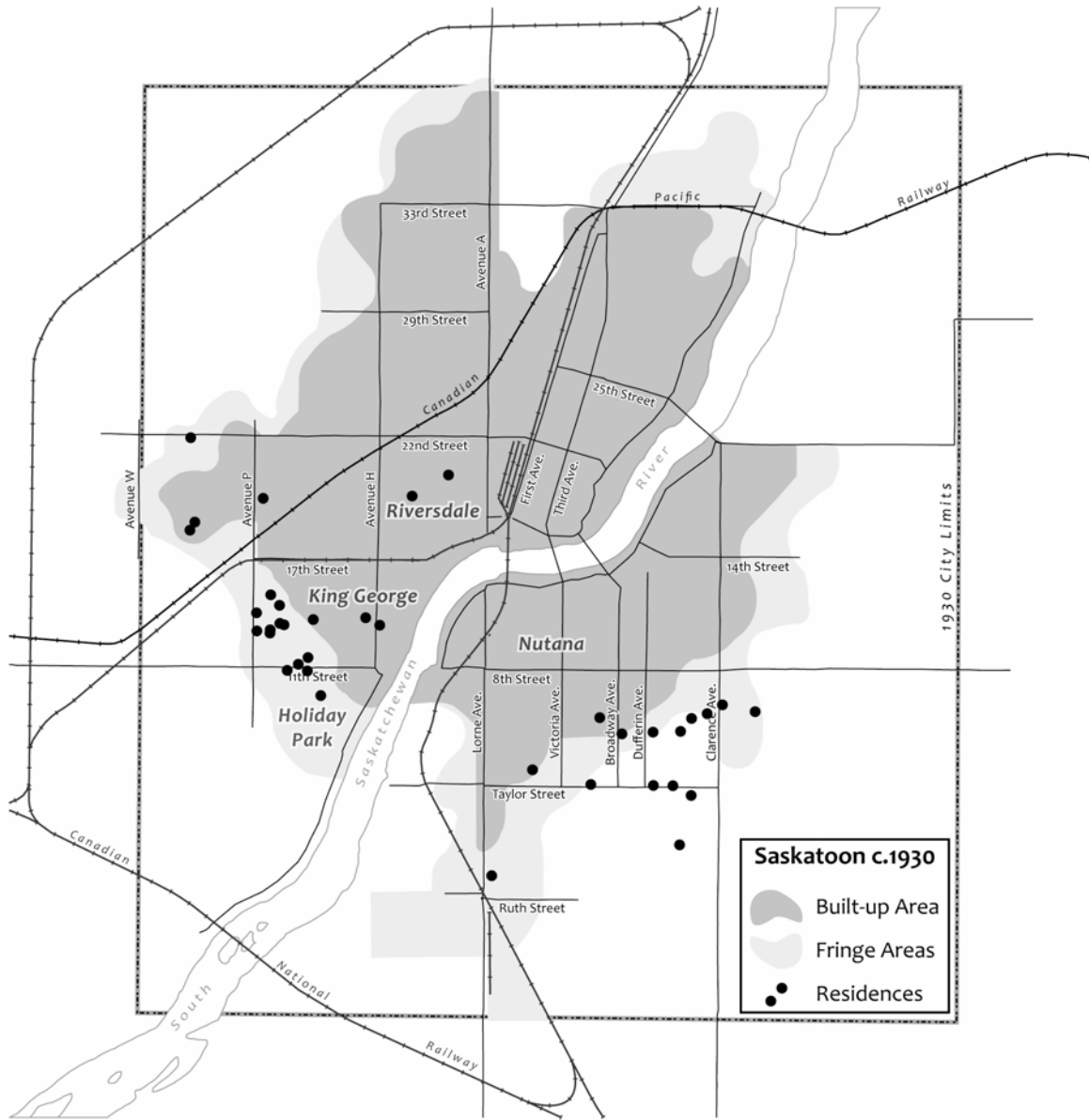
Source: Saskatoon Henderson Directories, 1913 to 1940. City of Saskatoon Archives; City of Saskatoon Voter's List 1936, City of Saskatoon Archives. Names have been included to demonstrate residency patterns of Round Prairie families. It is not an exhaustive list of all names identified as being part of the Round Prairie community. Spelling errors as they appear in the directories have been included in this table.

Figure 11. Map of Métis Family Residences in Saskatoon, 1915-1929



Source: Built up and Fringe area boundaries – City of Saskatoon, *Housing Report, 1961*. Planning and Building Department, City of Saskatoon Archives.

Figure 12. Map of Métis Family Residences in Saskatoon, 1930-1945



Source: Built up and Fringe area boundaries – City of Saskatoon, *Housing Report, 1961*. Planning and Building Department, City of Saskatoon Archives.

Despite being physically separated by the river, female kinship ties continued to play an important role in community formation, influencing residency patterns and community structure. Upon a closer examination of available archival documents and oral histories, it is evident that families continued to settle next to each other in extended family groups based on enduring principles of matriorganization. (see Figure 13) For instance, when examining the 1934 Henderson's Directories we see that Mary Ouellette, William Ouellette, Frederick Wells, Patrick Trotchie and Peter Trotchie all resided within blocks of each other on the west side of the city.²⁶ (see Figure 10) Mary Ouellette, Mrs. William Ouellette and Mrs. Frederick Wells are the daughters of Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier. Mary Ouellette was married to Jerry Ouellette, but in 1934, she is listed as the head of her household, so likely she and Jerry were no longer living together. Mrs. William Ouellette is actually Elizabeth Trottier, while Mrs. Frederick Wells is Rosie Trottier.²⁷ The Henderson Directories also indicate that Mary, Elizabeth and Rosie's brothers', Patrick and Peter, were also living close by. Most within a five or six city block's of each other, Mary lived at 733 Avenue O South, while her sister Elizabeth lived at 1617 – 14th Street West with her husband William Ouellette. Their sister Rosie lived at 320 Avenue P South with her husband Frederick Wells. Their brother Patrick Trotchie lived at 904 Weldon Avenue with his wife Mary Landry, while their other brother Peter lived at 825 Avenue O South with his second wife Elizabeth Laframboise. Mary Landry was the daughter of Isadore Landry and granddaughter of Moise Landry and Philomene Laframboise. This residency pattern is strengthened by using these genealogies when examining the 1936 City of Saskatoon Voter's List, where another sister, Madeline

²⁶ Saskatoon Henderson Directory, 1934. City of Saskatoon Archives.

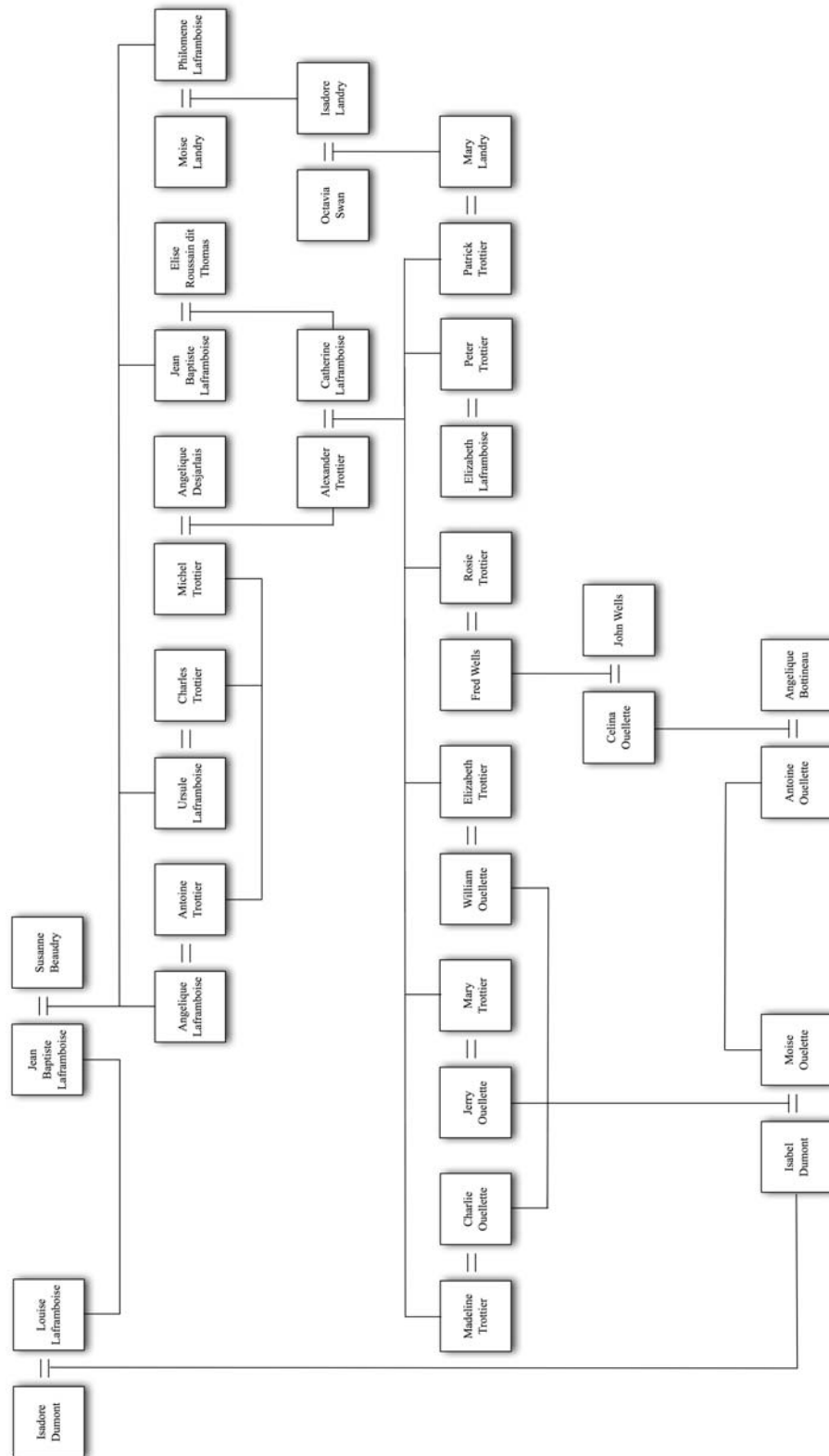
²⁷ Edie Trotchie, 18 February 2004.

Trottier is listed as living nearby at 1215 – 11th Street West with her husband Charlie Ouellette.²⁸ Extended family connections are further solidified because the husbands of these women, Charlie, William and Jerry Ouellette, are brothers and the sons of Moise Ouellette and Isabel (Elizabeth) Dumont. Fred Wells is related to Charlie, William and Jerry, through his mother, Celina Ouellette, the wife of John Wells and the daughter of Antoine Ouellette and Angelique Bottineau. Moise and Antoine Ouellette were brothers.

Using the genealogy, we also see that these Ouellette, Wells, Trottier and Laframboise families traced their family ancestry to the core group of Laframboise women from the 19th century Round Prairie community. For instance, their mother, Catherine Laframboise is the daughter of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Elise Roussain dit Thomas. Jean Baptiste is brother to Ursule, Philomene and Angelique Laframboise. Genealogical connections are strengthened, as Catherine's husband, Alexander Trottier as he is the son of Michel Trottier, the brother to Charles Trottier. Charlie, William and Jerry Ouellette are the children of Moise Ouellette and Isabel Dumont who is the daughter of Isadore Dumont and Louise Laframboise and, therefore, the aunt of Ursule, Philomene and Angelique Laframboise.

²⁸ Saskatoon City Voter's List, 1936. City of Saskatoon Archives.

Figure 13. Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier Genealogy



Also listed in the 1934 Henderson's Directories as living on the west side of the city are Alexander Fayant, Frederick Fayant, Mrs. Jerome Fayant, Mrs. L. H. Laframboise, Joe Ouellette, Joseph Ouellette, as well as James Wells, Mrs. John Wells, Mrs. Louise Wells, Lucy and Raymond Wells, Mrs. Mary Wells, Percy Wells, Stanley and Thomas Wells.²⁹ Some of these individuals with the Wells surname are the siblings of Frederick Wells. It is not clear how or if these individuals are related to the Round Prairie families, but it is likely that Mrs. L. H. Laframboise is closely related to Catherine Laframboise, and that Joe and Joseph Ouellette are closely related to Charlie, Jerry and William Ouellette. Joseph may even be their father. It also appears that Frederick Fayant has married into the Round Prairie families, as his wife was buried at Round Prairie prior to 1939.³⁰ From a review of the 1906 Government of Canada Census, we see that both Alexander and Frederick are the children of Mrs. Jerome Fayant and that in 1906 her family was already living Nutana.³¹ Sometime between 1906 and the 1930s, the Fayants moved from Nutana to the west side of the city. Other Métis families listed in the 1906 Census as having a post office address in Nutana included the family of William Latond [sic], Joseph Belanger, Carbot Fyant, William Fyant [sic], Isidore Poronto [sic], and

²⁹ Saskatoon Henderson Directory, 1934. City of Saskatoon Archives.

³⁰ Schilling, *By So Few*, 8.

³¹ Census enumeration of Jerry Fayant family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; William P. Delainey, John D. Duerkop, and William A. S. Sarjeant, *Saskatoon: A Century in Pictures*, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982). In 1882, Saskatoon was founded as a temperance colony under the leadership of John Lake, a former Methodist minister. In 1883, the city of Saskatoon was surveyed and settlement began on the east side of the river. In 1890, a railway line was established with a station located across the river, on the lower west bank of the river. Close to the railway line, a new town site was surveyed which left settlers on the east side of the river isolated from the growing settlement. As a result, the east bank settlement became known as Nutana and the west bank settlement, Saskatoon. Saskatoon incorporated as a village in 1901, and Nutana in 1903. Also on the west side, Riversdale incorporated as a village in 1905. By this time, representatives of the three settlements had begun discussions on the benefit of amalgamating. In 1906, with a combined 4500 residents, the Nutana, Saskatoon and Riversdale settlements amalgamated as the city of Saskatoon. Nutana and Riversdale remained the name of each of these respective areas of the city.

Reator Songory [sic].³² When comparing land descriptions recorded in the census it appears that William Latond [sic], Joseph Belanger, Carbot Fyant [sic] and William Fyant resided close to one another on 36-35-5-W3, while Isidore Poronto [sic], Jerry Fyant, and Reator Songory [sic] resided on 28-35-5-W3. From a survey of homestead records, it also appears that William Vandale homesteaded as early as 1901 on SW 16-36-5-W3.³³ At the time, this piece of land was at the southern edge of the city limits in the Nutana area. (see Figure 14.) Some, but not all, of these individuals had family members intermarried with the Round Prairie families. For instance, Isidore Parenteau's daughter Eliza married Charles Landry, son of Moise Landry and Philomene Laframboise. And, it is likely that Reator Songory's last name is actually Sansregret and is related to the family of Pierre Sansregret and Caroline Parenteau that lived at Round Prairie. The presence of these Métis families in the city as early as 1906 is significant as their presence indicates a slow movement of families over the course of a few decades. This early presence in the city is also significant as it also contradicts existing literature such as Edgar Dosman that identifies aboriginal urbanization as post-1960s phenomenon.³⁴ Their presence also supports more recent urban aboriginal literature such as Heather Howard-Bobiwash, Sylvia Maracle and Paivi Hoikkala that draws on a long

³² Census enumeration, William Latond family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; Census enumeration of Joseph Belanger family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; Census enumeration, of Carbot Fyant family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; Census enumeration, of William Fyant family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; Census enumeration, of Isidore Poronto family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; Census enumeration, of Reator Songory family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.; The correct spelling of these surnames are Letendre, Parenteau and Sansregret.

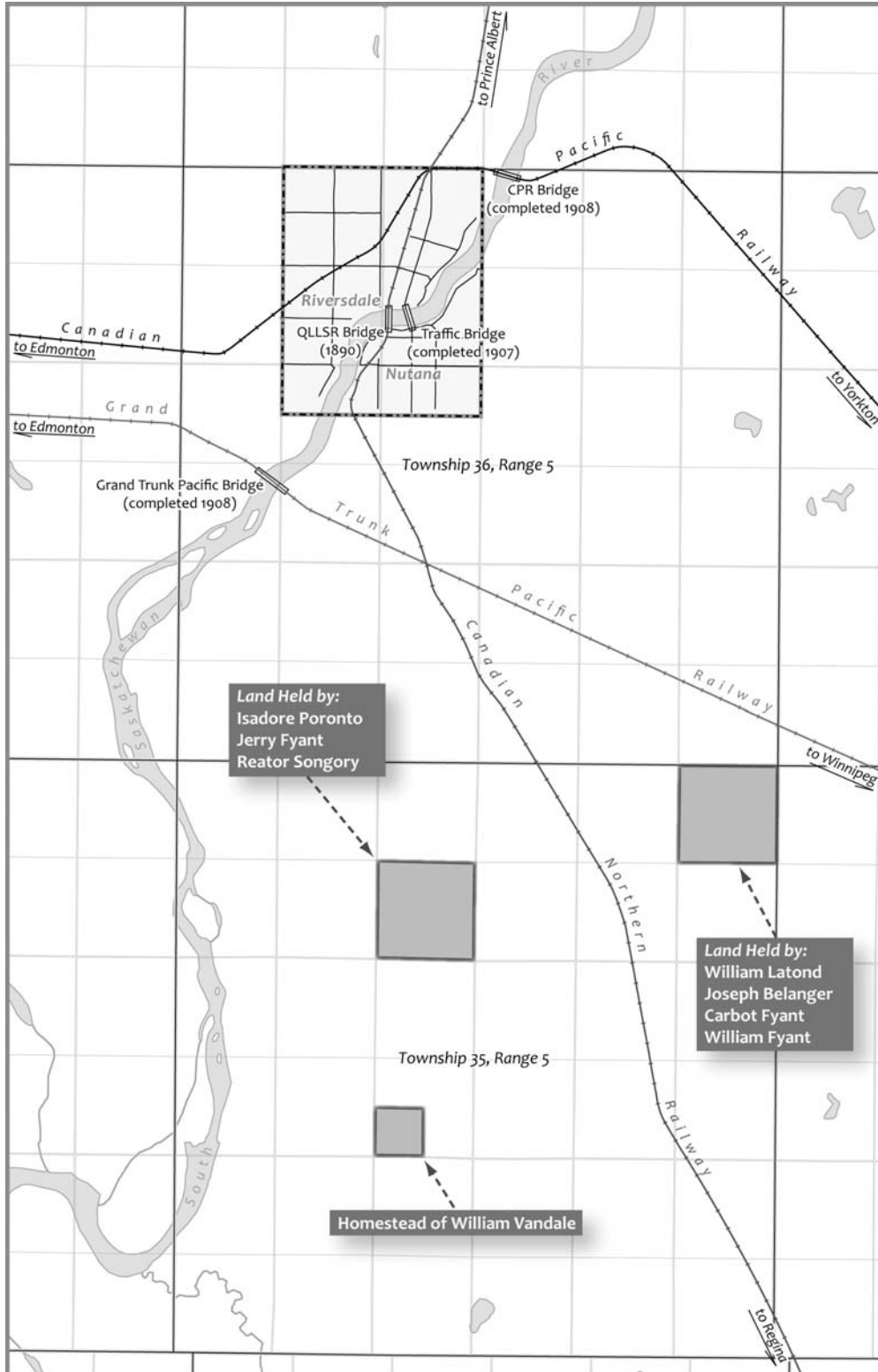
³³ Homestead Application of William Vandale, Saskatchewan Homestead File 333190, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

³⁴ Dosman, *Indians*.

history or urbanization dating to the early twentieth century and does not presume that urbanization began in the 1960s.³⁵ As a result, this examination of pre-1960 urbanization contributes to a broader historical context for life in the city for Native people than previously imagined.

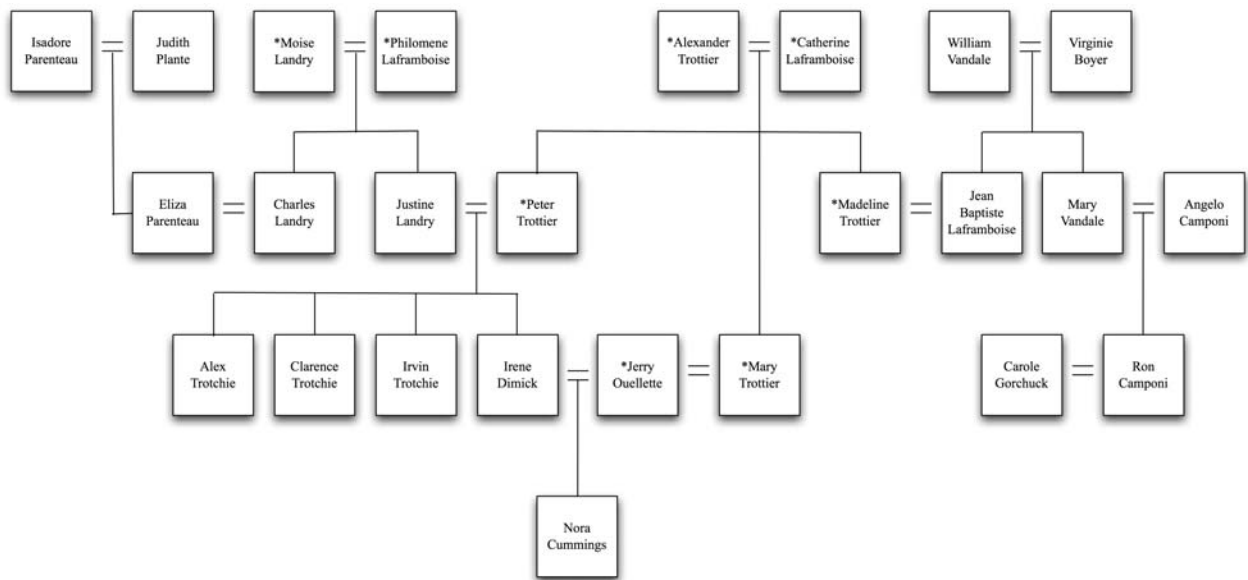
³⁵ Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*. Maracle, *Women*. Hoikkala, *Feminists*.

Figure 14. Map of Saskatoon Area c. 1906



Family patterns also begin to emerge when further examining the genealogy of Moise Landry and Philomene Laframboise. (see Figure 15) While Moise and Philomene were both deceased by the late 1920s and did not move to Saskatoon, their children Justine and Charles settled on the east side of the city. Justine was married to Peter Trochie and had at least seven children. Nora Cummings identified that Justine Landry, her grandmother had already ended her marriage to Peter by the time she moved to the city and settled on the east side.³⁶ As identified earlier, Peter is the son of Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier. In the city, Peter resided on the west side with his second wife, Elizabeth Laframboise, close to his parents and sisters. Furthermore, four of the grown children of Peter and Justine and their families can be placed as residing on the east side.³⁷ These children include Irene, Clarence, Alex and Irvin Trochie.

Figure 15. Families Residing on East Side



³⁶ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

³⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

Charles Landry, son of Moise and Philomene, married Eliza Parenteau, daughter of Isadore Parenteau and Judith Plante. As mentioned above, the 1906 Census indicated that Isadore Parenteau and his family resided in the Nutana area, including his daughter Eliza that was eventually to marry into the Landry family.³⁸ Through this marriage, the Parenteau family became part of the large extended family that continued to trace their lineage to the community of Round Prairie. A survey of 1930s voters lists and Henderson's Directories indicates that William Vandale was also living in Nutana 1934.³⁹ As mentioned above, he was identified as homesteading on SW16-36-5-W3 in 1901.⁴⁰ Therefore, sometime between 1901 and 1934, Vandale moved into the city. This is again evidence of the slow migration of Métis families to the city. William Vandale's son Jean Baptiste was married to Madeline Trottier, daughter of Alexander Trottier and Catherine Laframboise and becomes part of the community through marriage. Madeline Trottier later married Charlie Ouellette.

Interestingly, William Vandale's family also provides an example of how non-aboriginal newcomers were accepted into the community and of the persistence of nineteenth century traditions in community formation. In this instance, William Vandale's daughter, Mary, married an Angelo Camponi, a man who was Italian and not a member of the Round Prairie Métis community. Their son, Ron Camponi, indicated that after his parents married, his mother strongly encouraged that they socialized with and resided within close proximity to her family. He indicated that although his father was

³⁸ Census enumeration of Isidore Poronto family, Sub-District 8, District 18, - Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Government of Canada Census, 1906. Saskatchewan Archives Board.;

³⁹ Saskatoon Henderson Directory, 1934. City of Saskatoon Archives; City of Saskatoon Voter's List 1936, City of Saskatoon Archives.

⁴⁰ Homestead Application of William Vandale, Saskatchewan Homestead File 333190, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

not Métis, the family of Angelo Camponi and Mary Vandale were considered part of the Métis community, suggesting perhaps that in some instances, the matriorganization practiced in nineteenth century Métis communities continued in the city in the twentieth century.⁴¹

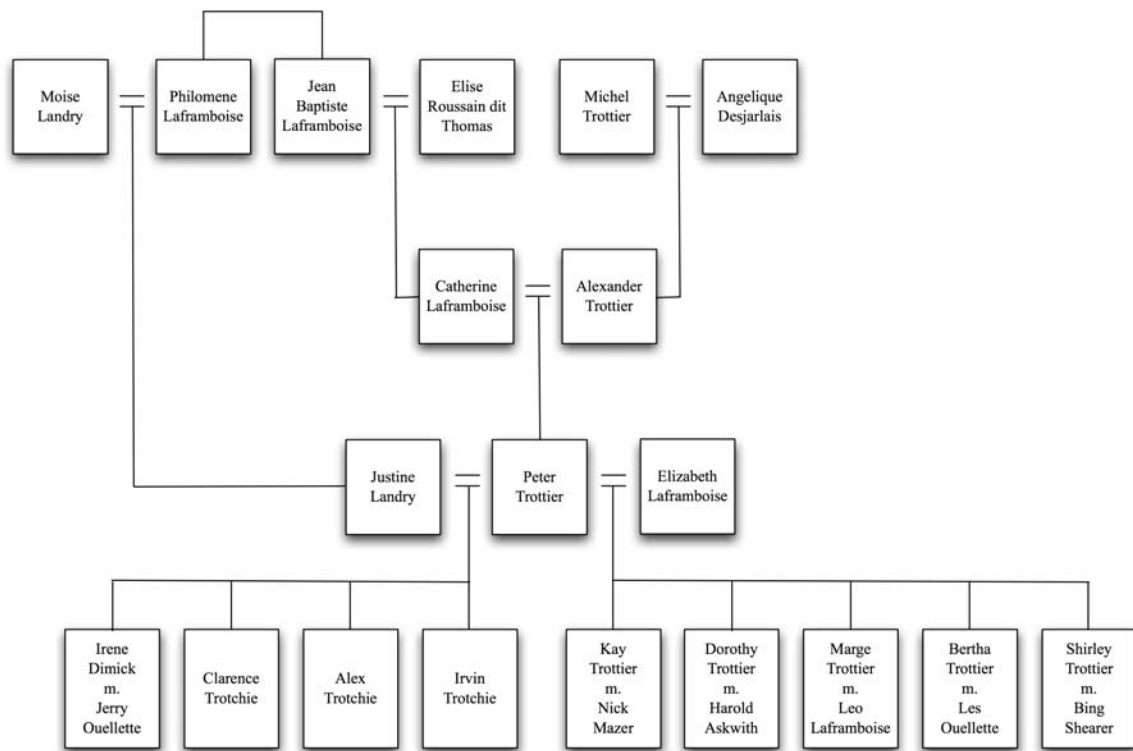
In the city, the tendency to continue nineteenth century marriage practices and marry within the Métis community, continued to a large degree. However, the frequency in which Métis individuals began to marry outside of their community also increased. For instance, within the family of Peter Trotchie and Elizabeth Laframboise, we see that some of their children continued to marry other Métis, while other children did not. (see Figure 16) For instance, of their daughters, Marge married Leo Laframboise while Bertha married Les Ouellette. Peter and Elizabeth's other children however, married outside of the Métis community with Kay marrying Nick Mazer, Dorothy marrying Harold Askwith, and Shirley marrying Bing Shearer. Interestingly, with this family we again begin to see a pattern emerge around a group of sisters, which is consistent with nineteenth century traditional practices. For instance, Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall argues that the practice of marrying outsider males was common, and essential, in 19th century northwest Saskatchewan Métis communities. Macdougall argues, that through these marriages, "Aboriginal women – Cree, Dene and the Métis – grounded their families in their homelands, creating for them a sense of belonging to the territory through a regionally defined matrilineal residency pattern and, therefore, female-centred family networks."⁴² The actions of these sisters, and other Métis women in the community, in marrying outside the Métis community is consistent with practices in

⁴¹ Ron J. Camponi, 19 March 1984.

⁴² Macdougall, *Wahkootowin*, 444.

other 19th century Métis communities. This group of sisters becomes increasingly important as these families continue to socially and politically organize, and adapt to urban life.

Figure 16. Peter Trotchie Genealogy



Despite the changes brought on by relocation to the city, such as physical separation with families divided by the river, the Round Prairie Métis families continued to view themselves as one community and as one large extended family. Nora Cummings, a direct descendent of the Laframboise and Trottier families that settled at Round Prairie in the 19th century, noted that although she was born in Saskatoon, her mother Irene Dimick was born in Round Prairie and moved to the city with her family in

the 1930s. According to Cummings, “there was always lots of visiting back and forth across the Broadway Bridge”⁴³ In an interview, she states,

When they moved into Saskatoon they kind of split the families. My grandmother [Justine Landry] and her family moved to the East side of town that’s called Nutana, in the Churchill area, but we knew it as Nutana. Then, my grandfather [Peter Trochie], he was separated from my grandmother, moved to the Westside. They were called the “west side breeds” and we were called the “east side breeds”... But it was one community. The east side ones, they would visit with the west side families. And they would come when the Exhibition was on and pitch their tents ...and the breeds would all go and visit. Not only then, but on other days they’d cross the river to visit. But the majority were on the east side of town. There was some on the west side, but not as many.⁴⁴

In maintaining this sense of community, these families relied on community organization practices and concepts of family that were consistent with traditional nineteenth century practices. In the city, extended family continued to be the way in which this community organizes itself, and upon closer examination we see that these families can continue to organize themselves along female kinship lines indicating that female kinship is still the underlying organizational concept. Interestingly, these families can all still trace their lineage to the core group of nineteenth century Laframboise women.

1930s Political Organization

By the 1930s there was a growing political awareness among Métis and a provincial movement to organize. According to author Murray Dobbin, it was as early as 1931 when a group of Métis from Regina, led by Joe McKenzie, began to politically organize around the issues of employment, education, relief and land rights.⁴⁵ Dobbin argues that by 1935-36,

⁴³ Nora Cummings, interview by Ron Laliberte, 28 February 2004. Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://www.Métismuseum.ca>.

⁴⁴ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁴⁵ Dobbin, “Part One,” 16.

some of the Métis had become frustrated with just talking. One of these was a Regina labourer named Joseph Ross. Ross and some others felt that what the Métis needed was an organization that could speak for the Métis people, an organization that could speak for the Métis people, an organization that could pressure the government to improve the conditions of the Métis – to help them get jobs, relief and education for their children, and to press their land claims.⁴⁶

From these concerns, a group of seventeen men and women met to form the Halfbreeds of Saskatchewan and began to more formally organize themselves, working with a lawyer to create the organization's Constitution and by-laws. At the group's meeting in the fall of 1937, the Constitution was formally accepted and the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS) was formalized. According to Dobbin, "the first organizers set out to various parts of the province to meet with other Métis people. It was an exciting time in which the SMS began the first efforts to tie together the Métis Nation since 1885."⁴⁷ The formation of the new organization not only served a political purpose, but through organizing began to renew the social bonds of family and kinship that spread across Métis communities in the province. According to Schilling, this was a time when "members of Métis families were finding one another after many years [and] was an exciting time for the Métis people generally for the old strings of Métis nationhood were beginning to be tied together again."⁴⁸

By 1938, the Métis Society had fourteen organized locals including one in Saskatoon.⁴⁹ The Saskatoon local was established as early as 1934 with R.O. St. Denis elected as the first president and Lawrence Pritchard elected as vice-president.⁵⁰ However, the local was not well organized until 1935-36 when Mike Vandale was elected

⁴⁶ Dobbin, "Part One," 17.

⁴⁷ Dobbin, "Part One," 18.

⁴⁸ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 145.

⁴⁹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 146.

⁵⁰ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 148.

Saskatoon president with Lawrence Pritchard again serving as vice-president.⁵¹

According to Schilling, during this time “about 60 people met in homes and although few definite programs emerged, there was the beginning of a strong community spirit.”⁵² As a child, Marge Laframboise, a direct descendent of the core group of Laframboise women, attended a few meetings with her parents Peter Trotchie and Elizabeth Laframboise. Recalling the creation of the political organization as important to the community, Marge noted the “Métis Society then being a very important function, you know, with Métis people. It was something they were really proud of and that they were all going to get together and do, do different things.”⁵³

Early leaders of the Saskatoon Métis Society in 1936 included Vandale, Pritchard as well as Charlie Landry, Alec Fayant, Charlie Ouellette, William Trottier, Isadore Trottier, Frank Trottier and William Vandale. It is unclear why there is a fracturing of the community’s leadership among all of these men rather than any one man specifically, as was practiced in 19th century Métis communities. What is known is that Charles Trottier, leader of the Round Prairie community did not move to the city of Saskatoon, rather moved north to Loon Lake, Saskatchewan.⁵⁴ Perhaps no one individual had assumed the leadership role in the newly urbanized community, rather the role was filled by numerous men. However, one thing that does remain consistent is the significance of women’s kinship in politically structuring the community. From an examination of these individual’s genealogies we see that many of these men are directly related through female kinship, and some are the children of the core group of 19th century Laframboise

⁵¹ Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 149.

⁵² Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 148.

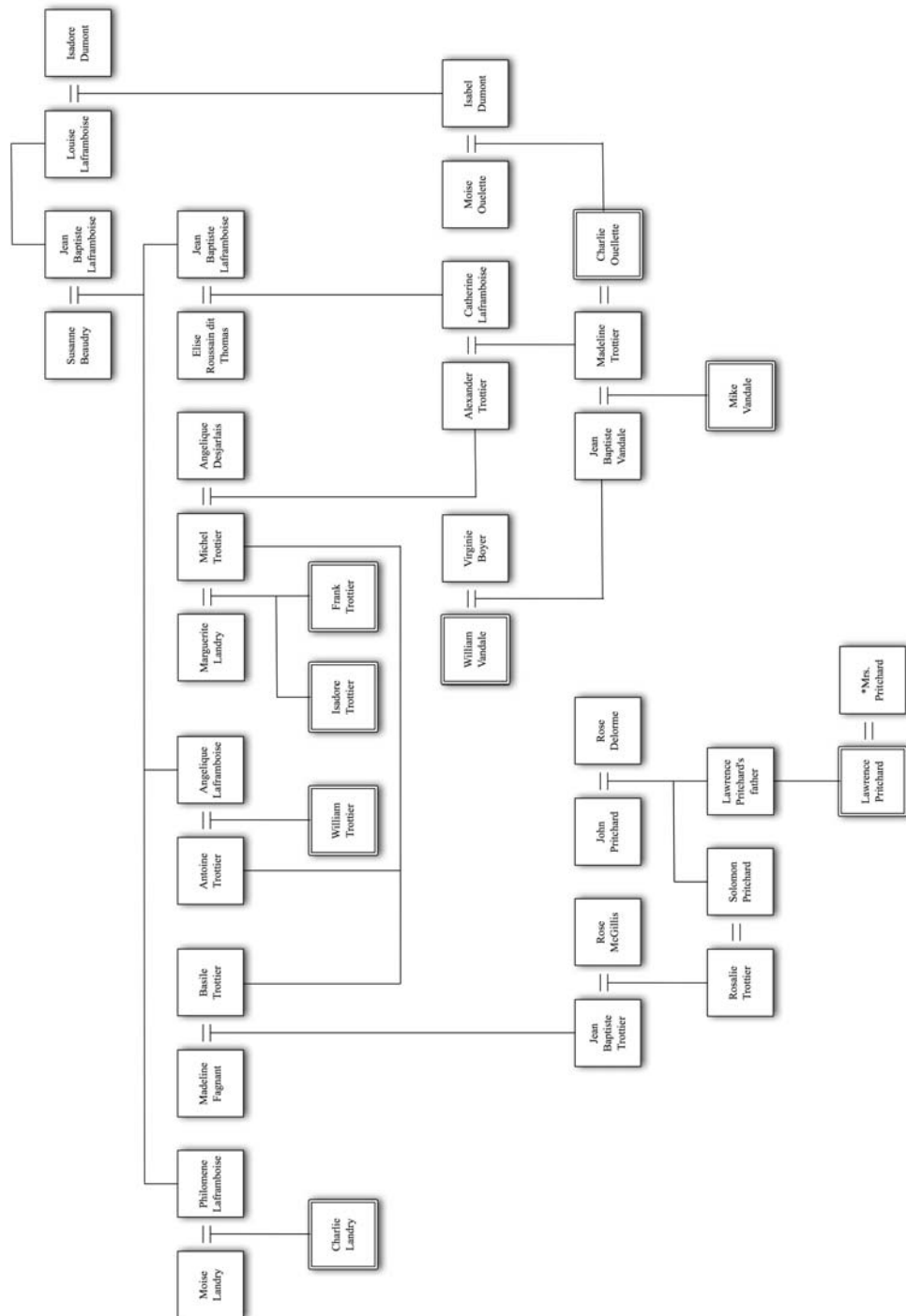
⁵³ Marge Laframboise, interview by Karen Trotchie, 19 February 1984. Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://www.Métismuseum.ca>

⁵⁴ Edie Trotchie, 18 February 2004.

women. (see Figure 17) For instance, Charlie Landry is the son of Philomene Laframboise and Moise Landry. Isadore and Frank Trottier are the sons of Michel Trottier and Marguerite Landry. Michel is the brother of Charles Trottier. Marguerite Landry was the daughter of Louis Landry and Louise Ouellette. It is uncertain if she is the daughter of Louis Landry who was identified by Norbert Welsh as being a member of Trottier's hunting brigade in the 1850s.⁵⁵ That she is perhaps the daughter of a member of Charles Trottier's hunting brigade and that her mother's surname is Ouellette suggests that she is most likely closely related in some way to the 19th century Round Prairie families. 1930s leader, William Trottier is the son of Angelique Laframboise and Antoine Trottier, while, Charlie Ouellette is the son of Isabel Dumont and Moise Ouellette. Isabel is the daughter of Isadore Dumont and Louise Laframboise, aunt to Ursule, Philomene and Angelique. Mike Vandale is the son of Jean Baptiste Vandale and Madeline Trottier. Jean Baptiste is the son of Virginie Boyer and William Vandale, who was also involved with the organization. Madeline Trottier is the daughter of Catherine Laframboise and Alexander Trottier, and granddaughter of Jean Baptiste Laframboise – Ursule, Philomene and Angelique's brother. Madeline was first married to Jean Baptiste Vandale, but later married Charlie Ouellette. Adding to the complexity of relationships between early Métis Society leadership, Lawrence Pritchard identified in an interview that his wife was a cousin of Mike Vandale. As well, his father's brother, Soloman Pritchard was married to Rosalie Trottier, daughter of Jean Baptiste Trottier and Rose McGillis and granddaughter to Basile Trottier and Madeline Fagnant. Basile Trottier was the brother of Charles and Antoine Trottier. Leadership also included Alec Fayant who was already living in the city in the early 1900s.

⁵⁵ Weekes, *Buffalo Hunter*, 57.

Figure 17. 1930s Métis Society Leadership Connections to Laframboise Family



That Lawrence Pritchard was seen as a leader in the community demonstrates the significance of female kinship in extending the bounds of the community. In this instance, the Pritchards become part of the Saskatoon community first through the marriage of Solomon Pritchard to Rosalie Trottier, and second through Lawrence's marriage to a member of the Vandale family. Solomon Pritchard and his wife and children eventually moved to the Willowfield-Baljennie area near North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Other families of Trottiers and Ouellettes that had intermarried with the Pritchard family also relocated to the Baljennie area, demonstrating the persistent matrilineal tendency of this community across generations.

“Well you never know what could happen”: Women's Political Activism

Much like the political roles women played in 19th century Métis communities, they continued to play a supportive political role in the development of the Saskatoon Métis Society local, with male leadership at the forefront. Overall, women were not active in formally leading the early Métis Society but supported the leadership in more informal ways by attending meetings, visiting with friends and relatives to garner support for the organization and encourage community participation, and by organizing social events that were also political meetings. According to Irene Dimick, women often attended the Métis Society meetings. In fact, as a child, she often attended meetings with her mother Justine Landry. According to Irene, she and her mother “went to all the meetings. We were there right from the start. My mother used to say, “well you never know what could happen.” So we'd go to these meetings, you know, with the other girls, the other Métis girls, I'd go with them and my mother.”⁵⁶ Women were also instrumental

⁵⁶ Irene Dimick, interview by Judy Thibodeau, 17 February 1984, Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://www.Métismuseum.ca>

in organizing events such as bingos, bake sales and dances that according to Schilling, “provided – in addition to income – social occasions to break the monotony of hard times. There were also dances and card games and always talk about land rights and education.”⁵⁷ Kay Mazer recalled that most often, these events were held in people’s homes, almost on a monthly basis. According to Kay, most often they “were held in Charlie Landry’s house because it was the biggest.”⁵⁸ Landry and his family lived in one of three brick houses, known as the Three Sisters, which were built on speculation during the city’s first real estate boom in 1911-12. Located at 1906, 1908 and 1910 York Avenue, the three houses were built by a local lumber company with the hope that the city would quickly spread beyond the Three Sisters. These houses held little appeal to city residents as they were on the outskirts of the city and did not have access to the city’s sewer and water system.⁵⁹ For Métis families such as the Landry’s however, they were available housing, close to extended family members some who lived in the Nutana neighborhood, and some who still resided in tents and shacks on the outskirts of the city. Kay also noted that women always attended the meetings, as it was their role to “organize the social part of the event.”⁶⁰ Using social events as a means to gather individuals served to maintain familial and kinship relations but also provided the opportunity for further political discussion and organization.

The overlapping social and political context in which these families organized themselves demonstrates the important role of women in ensuring the political organization of the community and is consistent with the supportive social and political

⁵⁷ Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 148.

⁵⁸ Kay Mazer 19 January 2004.

⁵⁹ “Three Sisters May Yet Come Into Own,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, Oct 1, 1950.

⁶⁰ Kay Mazer 19 January 2004.

roles women played in 19th century Métis communities. The strategies these women used in organizing their community were not unlike the actions of other Aboriginal women. From a review of recent literature that addresses women's activism in urban development, scholars such as Ann Terry Straus and Debra Valentino, Paivi Hoikkala, Susan Lobo, Heather Howard-Bobiwash, Nancy Janovicek and Sylvia Maracle argue that Aboriginal women often played a supportive role, recognizing formal male leadership and working "behind the scenes" in more informal ways. In their efforts, these women often looked to their traditional roles in the family and community in becoming community activists, leaders and to necessitate organization development.⁶¹ Maracle in her examination of Aboriginal women's activism in Toronto, Ontario, argues that in organizing women often opened up their homes as informal gathering places for newly urban Aboriginal people.⁶² Over time, these evolved into more formal organizations that were supported by the economic means of women. Like Saskatoon Métis women, Aboriginal women in Toronto looked to their traditional roles in their families and communities and used their skills, talents and available resources to generate extra income for the organization through bake and craft sales.

There were however some exceptions to the supportive political role played by women. Like 19th century Métis women, some 20th century women found ways to assert their political will. For instance, some Métis women, such as Mary Camponi became more formally involved in the organization, even representing the Saskatoon Métis Local at the provincial Saskatchewan Métis Society convention in 1937.⁶³ Mary's son Ron

⁶¹ Straus and Valentino, *Gender*. Hoikkala, *Feminists*. Lobo, *Clan Mothers*. Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*. Janovicek, *Assisting*. Maracle, *Women*.

⁶² Maracle, *Women*.

⁶³ Rita Schilling, *By So Few*, 17.

Camponi acknowledged that his mother was very involved in the 1930s Métis Society and that through her involvement she influenced her family. According to Ron, his “father wasn’t a halfbreed. Yet my mother sort of influenced all of us, even my dad, like his best friends were halfbreeds, he didn’t chum with his brothers as much as he did with my mother’s brothers.”⁶⁴

Métis Women’s actions in politicizing and organizing their community should not be overlooked. Their actions contradict the assumption made in 1970s-80s Aboriginal urbanization literature that aboriginal people cannot be both urban and Aboriginal. Clearly, these families found ways to absorb and adapt to change in an urban environment. Using the traditional social, economic and political roles women played in their families and communities they helped to facilitate urban adaptation and became instrumental in the politicization of their community. And whether knowingly or not, were positioning themselves to become more active, outspoken community activists and leaders.

Decline of the 1930s Métis Society

Unfortunately the Saskatoon Métis community’s involvement in the provincial organization was not long lasting. Community Elders have identified that the outbreak of World War II caused the decline of the Saskatoon Local of the Saskatchewan Métis Society, as many men and women abandoned their plans for the organization and joined in the war effort by either enlisting or taking employment in munitions or supply factories.⁶⁵ The provincial organization also faltered with the outbreak of World War II. Schilling and Dobbin also suggest that the organization partly faltered due to the

⁶⁴ Ron J. Camponi, 19 March 1984.

⁶⁵ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004.

influence of non-aboriginal individuals in the organization. They both argue, that the involvement of a non-Métis woman from Saskatoon named Wilma Moore caused internal conflict amongst the provincial organization. According to Dobbin, Moore attended the Saskatchewan Métis Society Annual Convention in July 1940 in an attempt to “drum up support for Mike Vandale, the man who held the position of president. Moore was influential among Saskatoon Métis and apparently wanted the Saskatoon Métis to keep his position as president.”⁶⁶ Vandale, however, was not re-elected as president. In late 1941-42, Moore and Saskatoon Métis called a meeting that they referred to as the annual convention of the SMS. R. O. St. Denis was once again elected president with Moore appointed as secretary, causing internal divisions between Regina and Saskatoon Métis, as the meeting was illegal according to the provincial SMS Constitution.⁶⁷ According to Dobbin, there was no organized opposition to the Saskatoon group’s actions, so they came to be recognized as the legitimate Métis Society.⁶⁸ The southern Métis, however, refused to cooperate and with the exception of “the executive dominated by Wilma Moore, the SMS became a very informal organization with little direction from its members.”⁶⁹

In the post war years, the provincial organization was revived with Fred DeLaronde from Mont Nebo as President. It is not clear why the Saskatoon Métis community did not become involved in the reorganization of the organization, but perhaps past internal conflicts between the Saskatoon Métis and others in the organization are to blame. For the Saskatoon Métis, it was not until the 1960s when they

⁶⁶ Dobbin, “Part Three,” 11.

⁶⁷ Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 147.

⁶⁸ Dobbin, Part Three, 13.

⁶⁹ Dobbin, Part Three, 13.

once again become politically active under the leadership of Clarence Trotchie, great nephew of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. Interestingly, in the early sixties, there was an effort by Clarence' father, Peter Trotchie, to document those that were buried at Round Prairie in recognition of the connection between the Round Prairie Métis community and the growing Saskatoon urban Métis community.⁷⁰ According to Schilling, Trotchie was only 16 in 1906 when he had dug the grave for his great aunt, Ursule Laframboise, Charles' wife.⁷¹ Charles had earlier donated the land for the cemetery.⁷²

Conclusion

The move to Saskatoon brought change to the lives of the Round Prairie Métis families. Consequently, Métis families found ways to adjust to their new environment by relying on familiar 19th century traditions. Central in these traditions were concepts of extended family where female kinship patterns worked to structure and determine the bounds of the community. When politically organizing their urban community, Métis families looked to 19th century political traditions that included public male leadership, supported by the community's women. In the city, Métis women found ways to contribute to Métis political organization by maintaining their traditional social and political roles of supporting male leaders, organizing social events and visiting in the community to encourage political participation. The overlapping social and political context in which these families organized themselves demonstrates the important role of women in ensuring the political organization of the community and is consistent with the

⁷⁰ Kay Mazer, 19 January 2004 and Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁷¹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children* 101.

⁷² Schilling, *Gabriel's Children* 101.

supportive social and political roles women played in 19th century Métis communities. As a result, nineteenth century traditions of family and women's kinship continued to be the enduring organizational concept maintained by this community and were expressed in post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism.

CHAPTER FIVE

INFLUENCING 1960S POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: THE GROWING ASSERTION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL WILL

The Saskatoon Métis community began to reorganize itself as a Saskatchewan Métis Society local, under the leadership of Clarence Trotchie, in late 1968-69.¹ By this time, Trotchie and other community members were already involved in the new Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre that had opened in 1967. When organizing Local 11, the community once again relied on past traditions of having male leadership that was supported by the women in the community. In his efforts to organize the community, Trotchie sought the assistance of women in the community to encourage active community participation in social events and political meetings.² Over time, Trotchie came to rely on the efforts of the women in his family including his sister Irene Dimick as well as his half sisters, Kay Mazer, Marge Laframboise, Dorothy Askwith, and Bertha Ouellette. (see Figure 16) He also sought the help of his wife Phyllis, his niece Nora Cummings (then Nora Thibodeau), and other Métis women who worked tirelessly alongside Trotchie and other male leaders to help organize Métis Local 11.³ Over time these women became more formally involved in the political organization by speaking out and asserting their political will. These women were often responsible for the day-to-

¹ In the fall of 1964, the provincial Métis organization reorganized itself into two separate organizations, the Métis Association of Saskatchewan that represented the north and the Métis Society of Saskatchewan that represent the south. In 1967, the two organizations amalgamated into the Saskatchewan Métis Society with Joe Amyotte, a Métis from the south, as president. He was president until 1969, when Howard Adams, an outspoken activist with a university education, was elected SMS president.

² Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008; and Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

³ Nora Cummings is the daughter of Irene Dimick and Jerry Ouellette. Born Nora Ouellette, she married and took the last name "Thibodeau". Nora is now remarried and goes by the last name of "Cummings". She is often referred to in the documentary and archival research as both Nora Ouellette and Nora Thibodeau. However, because she was one of the individuals interviewed for this study, she is referenced as, and referred to as Nora Cummings.

day operation of the organization's programs and even instrumental in the development of additional social programs such as the Native Alcohol Council and SaskNative Housing which were designed to meet the growing needs of Métis people in the city.⁴ What Local 11 created was a matrix of community support services structured along family lines, with a core group of women at the centre of the organization and consistent with 19th century kinship traditions where female kinship determined the bounds of community.

Organizing Métis Local 11

According to Rita Schilling, it was in 1969 when a group of Métis, led by Trotchie informally met at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre on 20th Street to begin discussing the social problems of alcoholism, poverty, poor housing and unemployment that were increasing in their community.⁵ When they first organized, the local was comprised of mostly Round Prairie families. According to Trotchie's daughter, Faye Maurice,

I do remember that very first meeting... I remember, my aunt, uncles and other people I knew, I think I was 15, 16, and they were up there having a meeting. They were getting ready. I remember hearing them say, "we need 9 people, that's all we need" I remember that, to start a Local. I remember that "you need 9 people" cripes we've got that many in our family alone.⁶

While women quickly got involved in the programs the Local initiated, some also assumed positions with Trotchie on the Local's Board of Directors. Irene Dimick and Nora Cummings were two of the first board members of the Local.⁷ Phyllis Trotchie,

⁴ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008; and Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006

⁵ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 158.

⁶ Faye Maurice, interview by Cheryl Troupe, 22 February 2008, Saskatoon, SK.

⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

Clarence's wife was also on the Board of Directors and served as the Local's secretary.⁸ Although she was not Métis, Phyllis was a member of the Trotchie family and considered part of the Métis community. She, therefore, was allowed to hold a position on the Local Board of Director's, not as a full member, but as an associate member.⁹ As members of the Board of Directors, women took part in Local meetings, and helped make decisions for the organization. However, according to Nora Cummings, the women involved were not seen as the organization's formal leadership, but were the ones to work toward organizing community participation.¹⁰ Each of these women involved in the organization were related to Clarence. Phyllis was his wife, Irene was his sister, and Nora, Irene's daughter, was his niece.

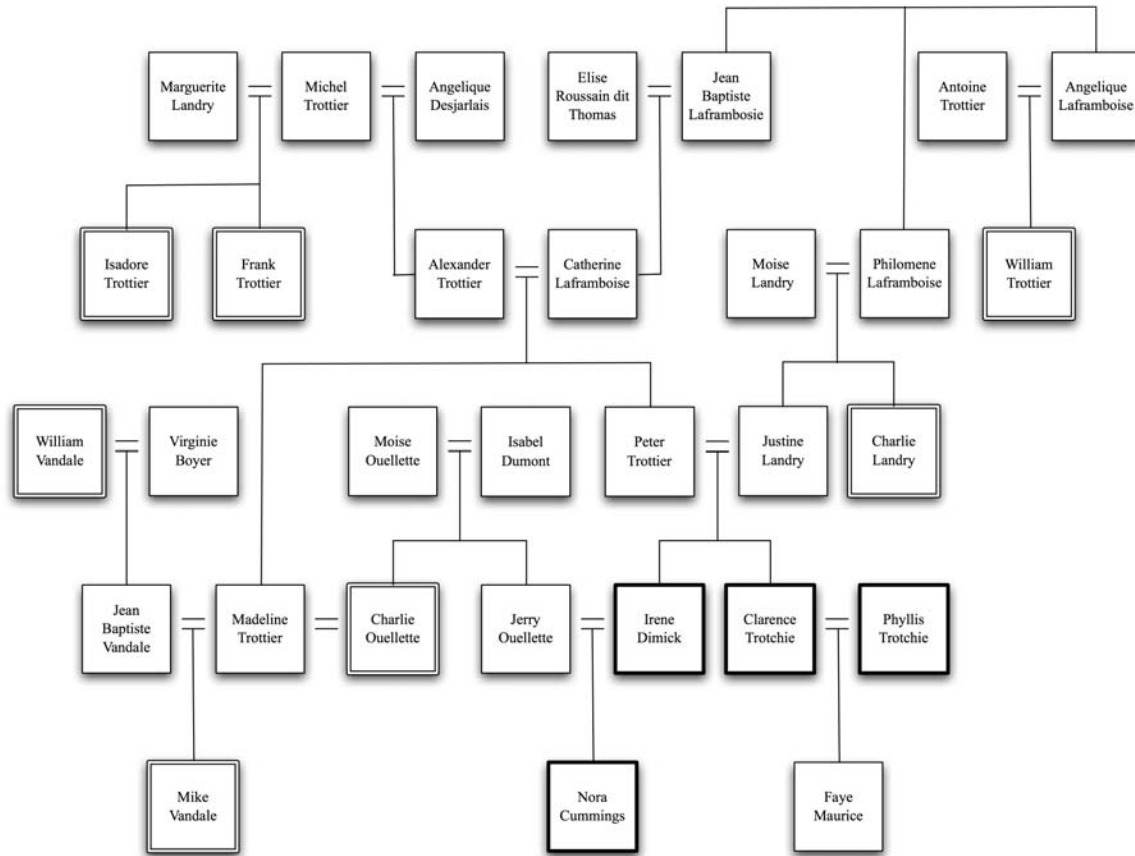
Interestingly, Clarence, Irene and Nora are also closely related to the earlier 1930s Saskatoon Métis community leadership. (see Figure 18) Clarence and Irene's mother, Justine, was a sister to one of the early leaders, Charlie Landry. They were also closely related to William and Isadore Trottier, who were also early leaders. Justine's mother Philomene was a sister to William's mother, Angelique, as well as to Isadore's mother Ursule. These family connections to earlier leadership were strengthened as Clarence and Irene's aunt, Madeline, was first married to Jean Baptiste Vandale and later to Charlie Ouellette. Ouellette was one of the first leaders of the Métis Society in the 30s, while Madeline, who was Peter's sister, was the mother of Mike Vandale, the provincial president of the Métis Society in the 1930s. Mike was the son of Madeline Trottier and Jean Baptiste Vandale, therefore grandson of William Vandale.

⁸ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁹ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁰ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

Figure 18. Connections Between Local 11 Leadership and 1930s Leaders



When first organizing, a lot of the work that women in the late nineteenth century performed was similar to the roles their mothers and grandmothers had filled when organizing the 1930s Métis Society.¹¹ Despite some formally being on the Board of Directors, they continued to play a supportive role for the male leadership. Much of the work these women did was “behind the scenes” and can be compared to the efforts of women in the Chicago Indian community. According to scholars, Ann Terry Straus and Debra Valentino, Indian women in Chicago contributed significantly to the development

¹¹ Straus and Valentino, *Gender*.

of the their community by working “behind the scenes”, serving on committees, recruiting members and participants, establishing clubs and organizing cultural events.¹² Nora Cummings noted that part of the work that women did in organizing Local 11 was to visit other members of the Métis community, explaining why the Local was being organized and encouraging other families to join.¹³ She also noted that although some families they visited were unsure about the organization and were, therefore, reluctant at first to get involved, through this visiting, women were very instrumental in getting people to attend meetings and eventually join Local 11.¹⁴ One of the ways that meeting attendance was encouraged was by the hosting of social events, such as the community had done when organizing first occurred in the 1930s. According to Nora,

...we decided, all the women would cook and we’d bring our men and our relatives or who ever wants to come. And we had Bob Caplette come and play the guitar and we had this old man, I think he was a Fayant or Fiddler. He came and played the fiddle for us. And we were gonna have a dance, we had a potluck and we’d bring our people and then we’d talk to them.¹⁵

This type of informal organizing proved successful for the Local, as these types of social events turned into political meetings where Trotchie was given the opportunity to publicly speak to the larger Métis community, informing them of why the Local was organizing and of the issues the Local’s Board of Directors wanted to politically address.¹⁶ As the Local began to grow, they found they had little money to hold meetings in Saskatoon and none to attend provincial SMS meetings. Generally it fell to the women to organize fundraising events such as bingos or raffles in an effort to raise funds.¹⁷

¹² Straus and Valentino, *Gender* 527-528.

¹³ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁴ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁵ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁶ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

Sometimes, Nora Cummings recalled, the women even went to “pick and sell bottles,” so that they could get the bottle refunds that in turn, enabled them to attend provincial meetings often in Regina, Prince Albert, or North Battleford.¹⁸

Creation of the Native Alcohol Council

Around the same time that Local 11 was being established, the provincial SMS was working to create a program to deal with alcohol abuse. With more and more aboriginal people moving to the city, alcoholism was increasingly becoming a social issue among the Métis. A recovering alcoholic himself, Trotchie too was concerned about the alcohol abuse he saw in the Métis community. And, he believed there to be a connection between alcoholism, poverty and unemployment.¹⁹ His vision for the Saskatoon Métis community was to have safe, affordable homes for children and families, education for children, and jobs for the community. Faye Maurice spoke passionately about her father’s vision for the Métis in Saskatoon:

My dad, when my dad sobered up, he wanted everyone to sober up and just enjoy life the way he was enjoying it, as a sober person. He knew it was possible... his vision was that we have houses, decent housing for our kids and that none of our kids would be denied an education. But I remember so many times him saying that we “could fight our butts off to get decent housing for our people, or to get our people into university, but unless they are sober and healthy. What good is a house? What good is an education? So sober them up first, make them healthy minded and then there is no stopping them. But what is the point of giving a drunk a house or trying to educate a drunk? ...He just wanted people to be happy and have a decent job, with decent pay and hold your head up high. Hold your head up high. He was a proud man, my dad. Even drinking, even as a drunk, his shoes were always shined and clean clothed. He always had that pride. I was proud of him.²⁰

¹⁸ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

¹⁹ Faye Maurice, 22 February 2008.

²⁰ Faye Maurice, 22 February 2008.

Trotchie firmly believed that in order for people to achieve these things, they had to be sober, and although there were many Alcoholics Anonymous programs available in the city, he knew few aboriginal people were inclined to attend.²¹

To address the problem of alcoholism amongst Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan cities, provincial Métis leaders began meeting with leaders of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI). Initially First Nations and Métis leaders agreed to work together, but just prior to receiving funding, the FSI withdrew from discussions as they wanted to focus on programming at the reserve level.²² In 1969, funding from the provincial Department of Social Services and the federal Department of Indian Affairs was received and the Native Alcohol Council was formed.²³ It became one of the provincial Métis Society's programs with funding to implement a fieldworker program that would assist in the establishment of treatment centres in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina.²⁴ Because Trotchie was president of the SMS Local 11 in Saskatoon, the provincial SMS looked to him to lead the development of the NAC treatment centre that was to open in Saskatoon.

In 1973, the Saskatoon NAC treatment centre was officially opened in a rented building at 401 Avenue H South. The centre offered a thirty-day residential recovery program. A year later, 113 patients had successfully completed treatment in the Saskatoon Centre. According to Schilling, the success of the program was that it incorporated aboriginal cultural values and languages into the program, making the

²¹ Dorothy Askwith, interview by Dave Hutchinson, 10 March, 1993. Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://www.Métismuseum.ca>

²² Donna Pinay, "Native Alcohol Council," *NewBreed* Magazine, March 1977, page 4.

²³ Schilling, *By So Few*, 39.

²⁴ Pinay, Alcohol Council, 4.

program more accessible to aboriginal people.²⁵ Those, such as Dorothy Askwith, Clarence's half sister and his niece Nora, attributed the success of the program to Clarence's belief that in order to help one recover from a drinking problem, you had to have shared the same experience and be a recovering alcoholic.²⁶ Irene Dimick, one of the NAC Centre's first fieldworkers, was also a recovering alcoholic. Her daughter Nora recalled that her mother worked extremely hard for the centre. It was a challenging job, but her mother, "being a recovering alcoholic herself understood that, what alcohol had done... she never once said that job was to big for her, or I can't so that. I never heard my mom say that, "I can't do that" she would always do the best she could."²⁷ Part of her work was to work with individuals and families who wanted access to treatment. Nora noted that her mother was very committed to her work and to helping people. Often, Nora noted, her mother would even bring clients into her home to "sober up" for a few days before being accepted into the program.²⁸

Despite the success of the NAC program, it eventually became evident that there was a need to have someone that could work with clients and their families once they left treatment.²⁹ As a result, in 1974, they initiated the Native Follow Up Program, which was geared to helping NAC clients with their recovery once they left the treatment centre. According to a magazine article in *NewBreed* Magazine, the Follow Up Program "got underway because of a high percentage of cured alcoholics leaving the rehab centre, there was also a high percent of people falling back into the rut of alcoholism due to the lack of

²⁵ Schilling, *By So Few*, 42.

²⁶ Dorothy Askwith 10 March 1993. Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

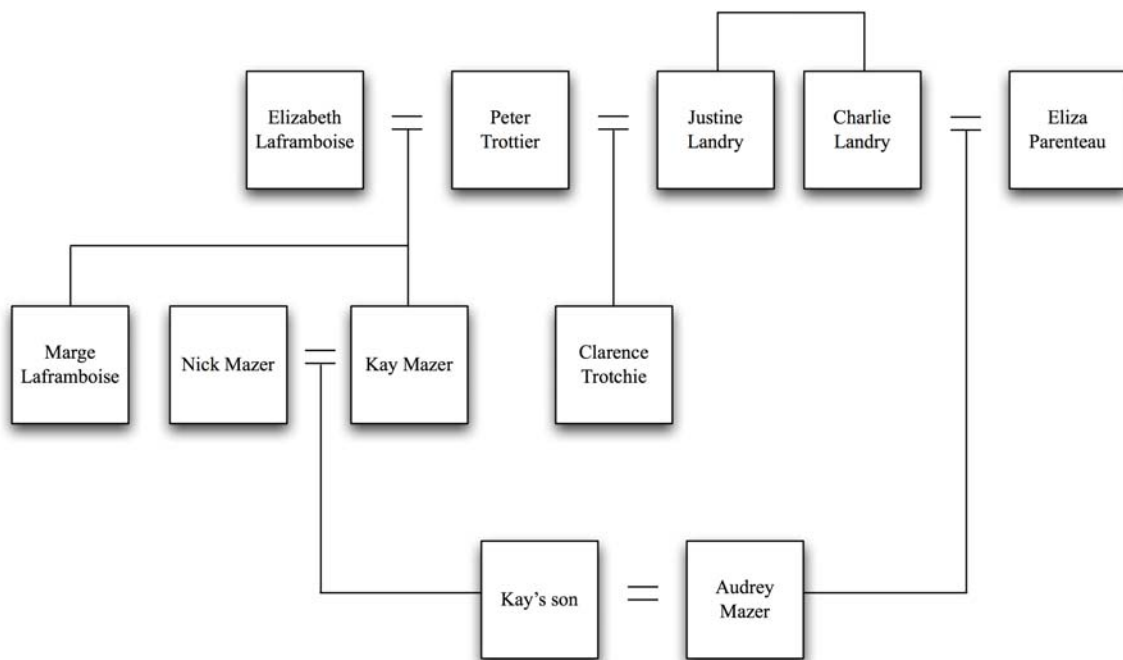
²⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

²⁸ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

²⁹ Fred Schoenthal, "Native Alcohol Centre," *NewBreed* Magazine, October 1974, page 7.

housing, good jobs, schooling etc.”³⁰ The program operated for three years and employed three women, Kay Mazer, her sister, Marge Laframboise and Kay’s daughter-in-law, Audrey Mazer³¹ Audrey Mazer was also the daughter of Charlie Landry, Clarence’s uncle. (see Figure 19) Their role was not only to provide support to those in recovery, but to help make referrals for clients seeking assistance with housing, social assistance, employment, education and even finding childcare for working parents.³²

Figure 19. Connections Between Employees of Follow Up Program



Kay Mazer recalled that she was very involved in creating the program, even though the men in the organization, such as Clarence, wanted to take credit for it.³³ Not close with Clarence, her half-brother, growing up, Kay did not get involved with Métis Local 11 until she was approached and encouraged by him to get involved.³⁴ At first, her

³⁰ “The Native Follow Up Program,” *NewBreed Magazine*, June 1976.

³¹ “The Native Follow Up Program,” June 1976

³² “The Native Follow Up Program,” June 1976, Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 163.

³³ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

³⁴ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

involvement was as a client in one of the sewing programs the Local was offering in partnership with the Friendship Centre. Gradually, she became more involved with events at the Local and, subsequently, with NAC. The suggestion that male leaders took the credit for a program that women created perhaps suggests that women, such as Kay, were beginning to think of their role in the organization as evolving. Perhaps, women were beginning to see themselves as community leaders and activists.

President of Local 11, Trotchie was also Chairperson of the Friendship Centre and many of the Local leaders also held positions of the Friendship Centre Board of Directors. As a result, programs such as the Court Worker Program were often jointly offered by both organizations, and in this case, the Court Worker Program was operated from the NAC centre.³⁵ Formally administered by the Friendship Centre, the Court Worker Program was funded by the provincial government. Court Workers were “to bridge the cultural gap between a native person and all agencies serving the justice system.”³⁶ According to Kay Mazer, through her work with the NAC and the Follow Up Program she saw that court judges were often becoming frustrated with First Nations and Métis people repeatedly coming through the courts for being intoxicated or for shoplifting. And, after the NAC treatment centre in Saskatoon opened, judges would often send offenders to the treatment centre “to dry out rather than send them to jail.”³⁷ And so, part of the responsibility of the court workers was to assist clients in obtaining legal counsel, help with interpretation in the court, public education and often, Cree translation.³⁸

³⁵ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

³⁶ Roy Romanow, “Press Release,” *Newbreed Magazine*, December 1973, page 15.

³⁷ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

³⁸ Romanow, Press Release, 15.

Building SaskNative Housing

The early seventies were a busy time for Métis Local 11, and by 1973 they were working towards the creation of a non-profit housing corporation in Saskatoon to address the deplorable housing conditions in which Métis and First Nations people lived. Opened in 1974, SaskNative Housing Corporation secured 13 houses in its first five months of operation.³⁹ Providing safe and affordable housing, houses were often rented on a referral basis to urban aboriginal people, including many clients that had completed the NAC treatment program or clients that had accessed the Follow Up or Court Worker Programs. Ron Camponi was originally responsible for the SaskNative Housing Corporation. However, Agnes Caron, and Camponi's wife, Carole Gorchuck also worked for the organization, collecting rent and doing general maintenance on the houses.

In 1976, to assist their tenants, who may have been facing challenges in adjusting to urban life, SaskNative Housing and Métis Local 11 worked to create a Family Worker Program. In partnership with the Department of Social Services, the Family Worker Program offered provided a "broad range of assistance to native people with emphasis on the prevention of child neglect and abandonment, adjustment to urban life, coping with the law, improving housing and reducing racial discrimination."⁴⁰ Because the Family Worker Program offered many of the same types of service as the Follow Up Program and the Court Worker Program, the three programs were eventually amalgamated into the Family Worker Program.⁴¹ Dorothy Lundberg, daughter of 1930s leader Charlie Landry, was one of four staff employed as a coordinator for the Family Worker Program.

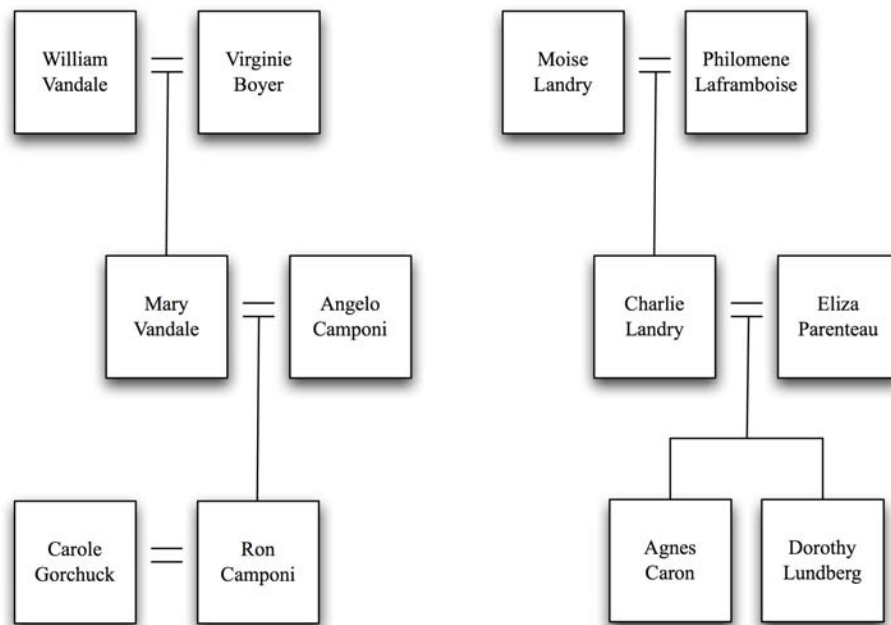
³⁹ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 161.

⁴⁰ Schilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 162.

⁴¹ Kay Mazer, 27 April 2006.

When we examine the family connections between the individuals who worked for SaskNative Housing, we see that they to were direct descendents of the 1930s leadership. (see Figure 20) Ron Camponi was married to Carole Gorchuck and was the son of Mary Camponi and grandson of William Vandale. Agnes Caron and Dorothy Lundberg were the daughter's of Charlie Landry. Agnes Caron and Dorothy Lundberg were also direct descendents of the core group of Laframboise women, as their grandmother was Philomene Laframboise.

Figure 20. Connections between SaskNative Housing Employees and Early 1930s Leadership



The varied role women filled through the Court Worker Program, the Follow Up Program, and later the Family Worker Program, is similar to what Susan Lobo described in her examination of “Urban Clan Mothers” in San Francisco, California.⁴² In Saskatoon, much like in San Francisco, it was community women that offered support to individuals new to the city, and helped them access many of the social support services

⁴² Lobo, *Clan Mothers*.

necessary for urban adaptation that otherwise would have been carried out by government social services.

Opening the Jim Sinclair Centre

By the mid 1970s, the success of Métis Local 11 in addressing social issues for their community was growing and leaders of the Local were also among the Board of Directors of the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre having been involved with the Centre since its inception in the late 1960s. By 1973, the Board of Directors of the Friendship Centre consisted solely of Métis, perhaps because of the Local's active interest in the Centre.⁴³ There were, however, also allegations that the election results favored the Métis Local because of the timing of the election. The election was held over the Christmas season which, resulted in little participation from First Nations people.⁴⁴ As a result, there were numerous complaints by members of the Friendship Centre that the Board of Directors should be representative of both First Nations and Métis people. They argued that there was too much focus on Métis interests and were concerned with the nepotism in Friendship Centre hiring practices. According to Wayne Stonechild, chief of the Native Youth Movement in Saskatchewan that operated out of the Centre, the hiring of centre personnel was strictly "a family affair."⁴⁵ By March 1973, these concerns had escalated and when the Board of Directors under Trotchie's leadership refused to call a new election, a group of about 50 Indian and Métis activists backed by the Saskatchewan Native Women's Movement, the Urban Indians Association, and the

⁴³ Hank Goertzen, "Indians continue to occupy centre," *The Star Phoenix*, 13 March 1973. Page 1.

⁴⁴ Goertzen, "Indians,"

⁴⁵ Hank Goertzen, "Protest shows problem 'coming to a head at once'", *The Star Phoenix*, 14 March 1973.

Native Youth Movement of Saskatchewan protested against Friendship Centre leadership and physically occupied the Centre.⁴⁶

The Saskatchewan Native Women's Movement was started in 1972 by a group of First Nations and Métis women in order to politicize First Nations and Métis women's issues. Instrumental in its organizing, Nora Cummings was also the organization's first director. According to Nora, both Jim Sinclair and Clarence influenced her in her work to organize the women's movement.⁴⁷ Nora's mother Irene also became involved in the women's movement and because of her experiences in helping to organize Métis Local 11, she proved invaluable as one of the Native Women's Movement's organizers.⁴⁸ That the Native Women's Movement, with Nora as the president of the Board of Directors and Irene as one of its fieldworkers, spoke against Local 11's over-involvement in the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre demonstrates that women were beginning to formally become political activists and community leaders. It is a significant demonstration of women's growing political astuteness and political will, as Nora and Irene were willing to not only speak out against leaders of their own community, but also members of their own family. While in the past, women such as Nora and Irene may have disagreed with, and even spoken out against their leadership within the bounds of their own their public demonstration of political will is not insignificant. That women were beginning to feel empowered enough to publicly disagree with leadership demonstrates that women were indeed becoming community activists and political leaders. Their actions demonstrate that women were perhaps beginning to see that their issues could not, or would not, be addressed through other Aboriginal organizations. These ideas are echoed in the work of

⁴⁶ Goertzen, "Indians."

⁴⁷ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

⁴⁸ Nora Cummings, 14 January 2008.

Nancy Janovicek in her examination of Aboriginal women's organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Much like the Saskatchewan Native Women's Movement, Thunder Bay women came to realize that their needs could best be met through their own institutions, and so, became community activists and leaders.⁴⁹

The growing tension and the ensuing protest at the Friendship Centre was partially the impetus for Métis Local 11 to purchase their own building from which to operate Local programming. According to Clarence Trotchie, the Local leadership was

...heavily involved at the Indian Métis Friendship Centre and we saw the friction that was beginning to be created between the Indian and Métis. We were not going anywhere so we decided the best thing we do was to get a centre of our own where we could conduct our types of programming and our types of culture... To avoid a hassle, because we wanted to work with them, we decided the best way was to get our own place...The building is in a downtown area, Avenue B South, and we own it.⁵⁰

Named the Jim Sinclair Centre after the Métis Society's provincial president, the Centre was located at 111 Avenue B South and was a step toward the Local being self-supporting. The Centre housed the offices for the Local's programs which, by this time, included a youth program, education workers, as well as the Follow Up Program and the Family Worker Program.⁵¹ Having their own building also provided a venue where the Local could continue to politically organize through social activities such as dances, bingos and cultural activities that were once again organized by the community's women. These activities were financially important for the Local, in fact, much of the building was paid for by the proceeds of the numerous bingos and raffles that the Local ran.⁵² As a result, the role women continued to play in organizing these activities should not be

⁴⁹ Janovicek, *Assisting Our Own*.

⁵⁰ Schilling, *By So Few*. 44-45.

⁵¹ Schilling, *By So Few*.

⁵² Faye Maurice, 22 February 2008.

overlooked. Through their traditional roles they contributed significantly to the creation and development of the Local and to securing a permanent space for social and political activities. Over time, through their efforts these women also began moving into more formal leadership roles and beginning to assert their political will.

Expansion of the Native Alcohol Council

By 1976, the NAC treatment centre was in need of a larger residential facility. Moving to 419 Avenue E South, the facility housed 17 clients, supported by a staff of nine including a director, senior counselor, assistant director, secretary, receptionist, cook, one full-time counselor, part time counselor and three night watchmen.⁵³ By this time, Clarence's sister Dorothy Askwith had begun working at the treatment centre. Also a reformed alcoholic, Dorothy began attending Alcoholics Anonymous in 1963. When she entered Alcoholics Anonymous, she found that she was one of few aboriginal people in the program.⁵⁴ This did not discourage her, as according to Dorothy, she became very interested in the program,

when I get into something I like to jump in with both feet and I really got involved in AA and learned about the whole program, and I guess when treatment centres started to open, particularly the native alcohol program, again it opened new doors for me...when my stepbrother, Clarence Trotchie became the director of the first native alcohol treatment centre in Saskatoon, I really got inquisitive. I really wanted to know what it was all about. And I guess he was secretly wishing that I'd come forward because he was really wanting some help. I went there and sat through lectures and stuff, observed the people that were in treatment and absorbed whatever I could. And I thought hey, "this is a piece of cake". I thought, "I could do this."⁵⁵

⁵³ Schilling, *By So Few*, 40.

⁵⁴ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

⁵⁵ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

According to Dorothy, Clarence had a mixed response when she first became involved at the centre. She recalled that Clarence was glad that she was helping, but also intimidated by her presence. Dorothy recalled that when she first attended, Clarence stated,

“I’m glad that you came, but I didn’t want you to come (to the lecture). I’m the director of the centre. I want you to stay here and keep your mouth shut.” He said, “if I make mistakes, please don’t embarrass me and try to correct me in a lecture, let’s discuss this by ourselves.”...so, we were learning and teaching one another...that’s how I got started.⁵⁶

That Clarence acknowledged Dorothy’s expertise demonstrates a shift toward female leadership. When Dorothy started as a counselor, she only wanted to work part time because she had small children at home or going to school. She wanted to make sure that she was home when they went to school and when they returned. Over time she began to work full-time at the Centre and acknowledges that she took ownership of the program, often referring to it as “her baby.”⁵⁷ Part of her job at NAC was to work with clients when they came into treatment but also to run support meetings for those already out of treatment. This, she says, gave her the opportunity to provide support to those in recovery as well as to observe individuals in their recovery.⁵⁸ Often, Dorothy recalled that when she observed someone that was doing very well in their recovery, she would recommend them for employment at NAC.⁵⁹ She worked at the Centre until her retirement in 1990.

Trotchie held the position of Executive Director for NAC until 1978 when his half sister Bertha Ouellette replaced him.⁶⁰ Bertha had been Trotchie’s assistant at the Centre for many years and was best positioned to take over the leadership role.⁶¹ While not close

⁵⁶ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

⁵⁷ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

⁵⁸ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

⁵⁹ Dorothy Askwith, 10 March 1993.

⁶⁰ Schilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 160.

⁶¹ Faye Maurice, 22 February 2008.

with his father's second family as he was growing up, Trotchie came to seek out his half-sisters Kay, Marge, Dorothy and Bertha's assistance in the growing Métis political community. Over time, he came to rely on these women, his sister Irene and his niece, Nora as well as other Métis women in the organizing of Métis Local 11's programs and services.⁶² After five years with NAC and eight with Métis Local 11, Clarence stepped down from leadership. That Trotchie, as the community's public leader, came to depend on the efforts of these women demonstrated the significant contribution these women were making to their urban community.

Like the aboriginal women studied by Straus and Valentino, Hoikkala, Lobo, Maracle, Howard-Bobiwash and Janovicek, Métis women in Saskatoon have a long history of participation in urban organizations.⁶³ Central in each of these works is the role of tradition in facilitating urban development. In each of these works, it is demonstrated that women's roles in these organization has not been static. Over time, the role of aboriginal women in urban organizations has evolved from working behind the scenes, to leading organizations, asserting their political will and creating organizations to meet their own needs. And, like aboriginal women in other urban centres, Métis in Saskatoon women were instrumental in the development of organizations to meet their community's needs.

Conclusion

The informal roles Saskatoon Métis women played in 1930s and 1960s political organization allowed them the opportunity and flexibility to organize their community in ways that were familiar and consistent with past practices. By organizing this way, Métis

⁶² Faye Maurice, 22 February 2008.

⁶³ Straus and Valentino, *Gender*. Hoikkala, *Feminists*. Lobo, *Clan Mothers*. Maracle, *Women*. Howard-Bobiwash, *Class Strategies*. Janovicek, *Assisting Our Own*.

women were instrumental in politicizing community issues and recruiting organization participants. Over time, as Local 11 organizations began to evolve, so to did the role women played. Women began to take a lead role in the day-to- day operation of programs and services, and began to more formally assert their political will and move from “behind the scenes” into a more formal leadership role. Throughout this evolution, concepts of family, kinship and tradition have remained the core organization concept for this community. Through the expression of these 19th century traditions, Métis women have made a significant contribution to post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism.

CONCLUSION

In this study, Peter Doug Elias' ideas of 'tradition' have been used as a theoretical perspective from which to gain a better understanding of post-1930 urban development, political activism and governance structures. According to Elias, for current behavior to be considered 'traditional' behavior it only needs to be continuous with the past, and not identical to past behavior. Therefore, in order to be considered 'traditional' the actions of post-1930 urban Métis need only be consistent with and not identical to 19th century practices. Using this understanding of 'tradition', archival research and personal interviews were conducted and genealogical reconstruction methods were used to examine the social, economic and political role of women in 19th century Métis families and communities, and to determine the extent these traditional roles were expressed in post-1930 urban development and political organization. Collectively, these research methods have served to better contextualize Métis family and community structures and the role of tradition in an urban context and demonstrated that Métis concepts of family and tradition remain the underlying organizational concept employed by post-1930 Métis communities and political structures.

In examining genealogical information, the strength of female kinship in determining the bounds of this Métis community was evaluated. What has been found is female kinship relationships have been, since the early 19th century, central in structuring and determining the bounds of this Métis community despite economic changes, community movement, physical relocation and political upheaval. Patterns of female kinship first emerged when examining marriage patterns of the members of Charles

Trottier's buffalo-hunting party during the 1850s. Upon examination of these marriages, it was found that Trottier's hunting party was in fact organized around a group of women, including his wife Ursule, who were all the children of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry. Female kinship networks remained consistent when the community relocated to Montana after the 1885 Resistance, when they returned to Round Prairie in the early 1900s, and when they relocated to Saskatoon by the 1930s.

When moving to the city, the community of Round Prairie carried forward traditions of family and female kinship that they had practiced in the past and began applying these concepts in urban development. As they had in the past, women continued to fill necessary social, economic and political roles in the community and women's kinship continued to determine the bounds of the community. While not formally recognized as community leaders, Métis women became involved in political organization in the 1930s as the community was forming the Saskatoon local of the Saskatchewan Métis Society. In becoming politically active, Métis women looked to the traditional economic, social and political roles they played in their families and communities. Women's efforts in politically organizing included visiting friends and family to encourage participation in political organization as well as organizing social events that created opportunity for political discussion. The informal roles Saskatoon Métis women played in political organization allowed them the opportunity and flexibility to organize their community in ways that were familiar to the community and consistent with past practices. By organizing this way, Métis women were instrumental in politicizing community issues and recruiting organization participants.

By the late 1960s, as the community was beginning to once again politically reorganize itself, women began to take on a more formal political role. While still not acknowledged as community leaders and activists, women found ways to successfully apply tradition to urban development and become community leaders and activists. Women's efforts to politicize their community included working toward the development of Métis Local 11, the Native Alcohol Council and SaskNative Housing. Women, such as, Irene Dimick and Nora Cummings, as well as Marg Laframboise, Kay Mazer, Bertha Ouellette and Dorothy Askwith as well as many other Métis women, were relied upon by male leaders. These women were responsible for maintaining the day-to-day operation of these organizations, were instrumental in developing programs and encouraged community participation. Importantly, most of the women activists and community leaders in the late 1960s-70s, trace their ancestry to the core group of nineteenth century Laframboise women, demonstrating the resilience of Métis traditions and the significance of family and female kinship in political organization within an urban setting.

The informal roles Saskatoon Métis women played in 1930s and 1960s political organization allowed women the opportunity and flexibility to organize their community in ways that were familiar and consistent with past practices. By organizing this way, Métis women were instrumental in politicizing community issues and recruiting organization participants. Over time, the political role played by women began to evolve and women began to take a lead role in the day-to-day operation of programs and services, and began to more formally assert their political will and move from "behind the scenes" into a more formal leadership role. Throughout this evolution, concepts of

family, kinship and tradition have remained the core organization concept for this community. Through the expression of these 19th century traditions, Métis women have made a significant contribution to post-1930 urban development, governance and political activism.

From their initial years in the city, the Saskatoon Métis community relied upon concepts of family, structured along female kinship lines, to organize and politicize their urban community. How these families continued to act in ways that were recognizable to their community yet adapted to the needs presented by the urban environment is a testament of their resilience as Métis people. Although some may argue that this political activism on behalf of Saskatoon Métis women and its leadership may be a result of the urbanization of the community and an adaptation to their urban environment, the efforts of Métis women can be seen as a continuation of the fundamental social and political roles they played in nineteenth century communities, the strategic social, political and economic ways they traditionally organized their families and communities along female kinship lines, and to early systems of governance and dating back to the large Buffalo Hunts of the 1850s.

This study adds to the more recent urbanization literature that addresses urban aboriginal institutional development and aboriginal women's activism in Canada, highlighting the role of women and tradition in influencing urban adaptation. Through this examination of women's efforts to politicize their community it portrays Métis women as active agents in creating and directing organizations, acknowledging the use of tradition in facilitating urban development, adaptation to an urban environment and in becoming community leaders and activists. As a result, this study challenges the

assumption that urban aboriginal organizations were largely male dominated and serves to contextualize the efforts of Saskatoon Métis within a larger framework of urban aboriginal institutional development and within the larger movement of aboriginal women's activism. From a closer examination of Métis political organization in Saskatoon it is evident that women were very involved in creation of these organizations and used traditional roles to facilitate urban adaptation, politicize their community and assert their political will.

This study also raises questions regarding the criticism that was leveled at Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre in the 1970s, as being nepotistic, and often run as "a family affair".¹ Through an examination of family genealogies, it is evident that in Saskatoon's Métis community, organizations were run by a core group of closely related individuals. This study however, suggests that the reliance on family members and traditional concepts of family are what made these organizations a success. Despite this, the evolving role of women in the organizations and the growing assertion of their political will suggests that at some point familial relationships were outweighed by the diverging political will of the growing community. For instance, as women began to publicly speak out against leadership and as they began to create organizations specifically for aboriginal women, familial relationships may have begun to hinder their efforts to politicize their community. Their efforts in asserting their political will suggests that they perhaps felt women's issues were no longer being met by organizations led by male leadership. As a result, suggesting that concepts of family were perhaps no longer working to suit their needs.

¹ Goertzen, *Protest*.

This research makes contributions to what we know about aboriginal women's activism and urban development. And it demonstrates that genealogical reconstruction is a useful methodology for examining urban aboriginal organizational development. This study demonstrates how traditional concepts of kinship and familial relationships, that worked in small band societies and in 19th century social and political contexts, may be translated into a contemporary urban community that does not necessarily value the same concepts. As such, these methods may offer much to future studies of contemporary urban aboriginal organizations.

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